Peg o' My Heart

J. Hartley Manners

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Dorothy Sundler
Napa

"Sure I only came in this minnit"

PEG O' MY HEART

A COMEDY OF YOUTH

BY

J. HARTLEY MANNERS

THIS NOVEL IS FOUNDED BY MR. MANNERS
ON HIS PLAY OF THE SAME TITLE

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PLAY

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TO

"LAURIE"

"—in that which no waters can quench,
No time forget, nor distance wear away."

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as Love's Young Dream."

BOOK I

THE ROMANCE OF AN IRISH AGITATOR AND AN ENGLISH LADY OF QUALITY

CHAPTER I

THE IRISH AGITATOR MAKES HIS FIRST APPEARANCE

"Faith, there's no man says more and knows less than yerself, I'm thinkin'."

"About Ireland, yer riverence?"

"And everything else, Mr. O'Connell."

"Is that criticism or just temper, Father?"

"It's both, Mr. O'Connell."

"Sure it's the good judge ye must be of ignorance, Father Cahill."

"And what might that mane?"

"Ye live so much with it, Father."

"I'm lookin' at it and listenin' to it now, Frank O'Connell."

"Then it's a miracle has happened, Father."

"A miracle?"

"To see and hear one's self at the same time is indade a miracle, yer riverence."

Father Cahill tightened his grasp on his blackthorn stick, and shaking it in the other's face, said:

"Don't provoke the Man of God!"

"Not for the wurrld," replied the other meekly, "bein' mesef a Child of Satan."

"And that's what ye are. And ye'd have others like yerself. But ye won't while I've a tongue in me head and a sthrong stick in me hand."

O'Connell looked at him with a mischievous twinkle in his blue-grey eyes:

"Yer eloquence seems to nade somethin' to back it up, I'm thinkin'."

Father Cahill breathed hard. He was a splendid type of the Irish Parish-Priest of the old school. Gifted with a vivid power of eloquence as a preacher, and a heart as tender as a woman's toward the poor and the wretched, he had been for many years idolised by the whole community of the village of M— in County Clare. But of late there was a growing feeling of discontent among the younger generation. They lacked the respect their elders so willingly gave. They asked questions instead of answering them. They began to throw themselves, against Father Cahill's express wishes and commands, into the fight for Home Rule under the masterly statesmanship of Charles Stuart Parnell. Already more than one prominent speaker had come into the little village and sown the seeds of temporal and spiritual unrest. Father Cahill opposed these men to the utmost of his power. He saw, as so many far-sighted priests did, the legacy of bloodshed and desolation that would follow any direct action by the Irish against the British Government. Though the blood of the patriot beat in Father Cahill's veins, the well-being of the people who had grown up with him was near to his heart. He was their Priest and he could not bear to think of men he had known as children being beaten and maimed by constabulary, and sent to prison afterwards, in the, apparently, vain fight for self-government.

To his horror that day he met Frank Owen O'Connell, one of the most notorious of all the younger agitators, in the main street of the little village.

O'Connell's back-sliding had been one of Father Cahill's bitterest regrets. He had closed O'Connell's father's eyes in death and had taken care of the boy as well as he could. But at the age of fifteen the youth left the village, that had so many wretched memories

of hardship and struggle, and worked his way to Dublin. It was many years before Father Cahill heard of him again. He had developed meanwhile into one of the most daring of all the fervid speakers in the sacred Cause of Liberty. Many were the stories told of his narrow escapes from death and imprisonment. He always had the people on his side, and once away from the hunt, he would hide in caves, or in mountains, until the hue and cry was over, and then appear in some totally unexpected town and call on the people to act in the name of Freedom.

And that was exactly what happened on this particular day. He had suddenly appeared in the town he was born in and called a meeting on St. Kernan's Hill that afternoon.

It was this meeting Father Cahill was determined to stop by every means in his power.

He could hardly believe that this tall, bronzed, powerful young man was the Frank O'Connell he had watched about the village, as a boy — pale, dejected, and with but little of the fire of life in him. Now as he stood before Father Cahill and looked him straight through with his piercing eye, shoulders thrown back, and head held high, he looked every inch a born leader of men, and just for a moment the priest quailed. But only for a moment.

"Not a member of my flock will attend yer meetin' to-day. Not a door will open this day. Ye can face the constabulary yerself and the few of the rubble that'll follow ye. But none of my God-fearin' people will risk their lives and their liberty to listen to you."

O'Connell looked at him strangely. A far-away glint came into his eye, and the suspicion of a tear, as he answered:

"Sure it's precious little they'd be riskin', Father Ca-

hill; havin' *no* liberty and their lives bein' of little account to them."

O'Connell sighed as the thought of his fifteen years of withered youth in that poor little village came up before him.

"Let my people alone, I tell ye!" cried the priest. "It's contented they've been until the likes of you came amongst us."

"Then they must have been easily satisfied," retorted O'Connell, "to judge by their poor little homes and their drab little lives."

"A hovel may be a palace if the Divine Word is in it," said the priest.

"Sure it's that kind of tachin' keeps Ireland the mockery of the whole world. The Divine Word should bring Light. It's only darkness I find in this village," argued O'Connell.

"I've given my life to spreadin' the Light!" said the priest.

A smile hovered on O'Connell's lips as he muttered:

"Faith, then, I'm thinkin' it must be a *dark-lantern* yer usin', yer riverence."

"Is that the son of Michael O'Connell talkin'?"

Suddenly the smile left O'Connell's lips, the sneer died on his tongue, and with a flash of power that turned to white heat before he finished, he attacked the priest with:

"Yes, it is! It is the son of Michael O'Connell who died on the roadside and was buried by the charity of his neighbours. Michael O'Connell, born in the image of God, who lived eight-and-fifty years of torment and starvation and sickness and misery! Michael O'Connell, who was thrown out from a bed of fever, by order of his landlord, to die in sight of where he was born. It's his

son is talkin', Father Cahill, and it's his son *will* talk while there's breath in his body to keep his tongue waggin'. It's a precious legacy of hatred Michael O'Connell left his son, and there's no priest, no government, no policeman or soldier will kape that son from spendin' his legacy."

The man trembled from head to foot with the nervous intensity of his attack. Everything that had been outraged in him all his life came before him.

Father Cahill began to realise as he watched him the secret of the tremendous appeal the man had to the suffering people. Just for a moment the priest's heart went out to O'Connell, agitator though he was.

"Your father died with all the comforts of the Holy Church," said the priest gently, as he put his old hand on the young man's shoulder.

"The comforts of the church!" scoffed O'Connell. "Praise be to heaven for that!" He laughed a grim, derisive laugh as he went on:

"Sure it's the fine choice the Irish peasant has to-day. 'Stones and dirt are good enough for them to eat,' sez the British government. 'Give them prayers,' say the priests. And so they die like flies in the highways and hedges, but with 'all the comforts of the Holy Church'!"

Father Cahill's voice thrilled with indignation as he said:

"I'll not stand and listen to ye talk that way, Frank O'Connell."

"I've often noticed that those who are the first to *preach* truth are the last to *listen* to it," said the agitator drily.

"Where would Ireland be to-day but for the priest? Answer me that. Where would she be? What has my life here been? I accepted the yoke of the Church when

I was scarcely your age. I've given my life to serving it. To help the poor, and to keep faith and love for Him in their hearts. To tache the little children and bring them up in the way of God. I've baptised them when their eyes first looked out on this wurrld of sorrows. I've given them in marriage, closed their eyes in death, and read the last message to Him for their souls. And there are thousands more like me, giving their lives to their little missions, trying to kape the people's hearts clean and honest, so that their souls may go to Him when their journey is ended."

Father Cahill took a deep breath as he finished. He had indeed summed up his life's work. He had given it freely to his poor little flock. His only happiness had been in ministering to their needs. And now to have one to whom he had taught his first prayer, heard his first confession and given him his first Holy Communion speak scoffingly of the priest, hurt him as nothing else could hurt and bruise him.

The appeal was not lost on O'Connell. In his heart he loved Father Cahill for the Christ-like life of self-denial he had passed in this little place. But in his brain O'Connell pitied the old man for his wasted years in the darkness of ignorance in which so many of the villages of Ireland seemed to be buried.

O'Connell belonged to the "Young Ireland" movement. They wanted to bring the searchlight of knowledge into the abodes of darkness in which the poor of Ireland were submerged. To the younger men it seemed the priests were keeping the people from enlightenment. And until the fierce blaze of criticism could be turned on to the government of cruelty and oppression there was small hope of freeing the people who had suffered so long in silence. O'Connell was in the front band of

men striving to arouse the sleeping nation to a sense of its own power. And nothing was going to stop the onward movement. It pained him to differ from Father Cahill — the one friend of his youth. If only he could alter the good priest's outlook — win him over to the great procession that was marching surely and firmly to self-government, freedom of speech and of action, and to the ultimate making of men of force out of the crushed and the hopeless. He would try.

"Father Cahill," he began softly, as though the good priest might be wooed by sweet reason when the declamatory force of the orator failed, "don't ye think it would be wiser to attend a little more to the people's *bodies* than to their *souls?* to their *brains* rather than to their *hearts?* Don't ye?"

"No, I do *not*," hotly answered the priest.

"Well, if ye *did*," said the agitator, "if more priests did, it's a different Ireland we'd be livin' in to-day — that we would. The Christian's heaven seems so far away when he's livin' in hell. Try to make *earth* more like a heaven and he'll be more apt to listen to stories of the other one. Tache them to kape their hovels clean and their hearts and lives will have a betther chance of health. Above all broaden their minds. Give them education and the Divine tachin' will find a surer restin' place. Ignorance and dirt fill the hospitals and the asylums, and it is *that* so many of the priests are fosterin'."

"I'll not listen to another wurrd," cried Father Cahill, turning away.

O'Connell strode in front of him.

"Wait. There's another thing. I've heard more than one priest boast that there was less sin in the villages of Ireland than in any other country. And why?

What is yer great cure for vice? *Marriage* — isn't it?"

"What are ye sayin'?"

"I'm sayin' this, Father Cahill. If a boy looks at a girl twice, what do ye do? Engage them to be married. To you marriage is the safeguard against sin. And what *are* such marriages? Hunger marryin' thirst! Poverty united to misery! Men and women ignorant and stunted in mind and body, bound together by a sacrament, givin' them the right to bring others, equally distorted, into the wurrld. And when they're born you baptise them, and you have more souls entered on the great register for the Holy Church. Bodies livin' in perpetual torment, with a heaven wavin' at them all through their lives as a reward for their suffering here. I tell ye ye're wrong! Ye're wrong! Ye're wrong! The misery of such marriages will reach through all the generations to come. I'd rather see vice — vice that burns out and leaves scar-white the lives it scorches. There is more sin in the *hearts* and *minds* of these poor, wretched, ill-mated people than in the sinks of Europe. There is some hope for the vicious. Intelligence and common-sense will wean them from it. But there is no hope for the people whose lives from the cradle to the grave are drab and empty and sordid and wretched."

As O'Connell uttered this terrible arraignment of the old order of protecting society by early and indiscriminate marriages, it seemed as if the mantle of some modern prophet had fallen on him. He had struck at the real keynote of Ireland's misery to-day. The spirit of oppression followed them into the privacy of their lives. Even their wives were chosen for them by their teachers. Small wonder the English government could enforce bru-

tal and unjust laws when the very freedom of choosing their mates and of having any voice in the control of their own homes was denied them.

To Father Cahill such words were blasphemy. He looked at O'Connell in horror.

"Have ye done?" he asked.

"What else I may have to say will be said on St. Kernan's Hill this afternoon."

"There will be no meetin' there to-day," cried the priest.

"Come and listen to it," replied the agitator.

"I've forbidden my people to go."

"They'll come if I have to drag them from their homes."

"I've warned the resident-magistrate. The police will be there if ye thry to hold a meetin'."

"We'll outnumber them ten to one."

"There'll be riotin' and death."

"Better to die in a good cause than to live in a bad one," cried O'Connell. "It's the great dead who lead the world by their majesty. It's the bad livin' who keep it back by their infamy."

"Don't do this, Frank O'Connell. I ask you in the name of the Church in which ye were baptised — by me."

"I'll do it in the name of the suffering people I was born among."

"I command you! Don't do this!"

"I can hear only the voice of my dead father saying: 'Go on!'"

"I entreat you — don't!"

"My father's voice is louder than yours, Father Cahill."

"Have an old man's tears no power to move ye?"

O'Connell looked at the priest. Tears were stream-

ing down his cheeks. He made no effort to staunch them. O'Connell hesitated, then he said firmly:

"My father wept in the ditch when he was dyin', dyin' in sight of his home. Mine was the only hand that wiped away his tears. I can see only *his* to-day, Father."

"I'll make my last appeal. What good can this meetin' do? Ye say the people are ignorant and wretched. Why have them batthered and shot down by the soldiers?"

"It has always been the martyrs who have made a cause. I am willin' to be one. I'd be a thraitor if I passed my life without lifting my voice and my hands against my people's oppressors."

"Ye're throwin' yer life away, Frank O'Connell."

"I wouldn't be the first and I won't be the last."

"Nothing will move ye?" cried the priest.

"One thing only," replied the agitator.

"And what is that?"

"Death!" and O'Connell strode abruptly away.

CHAPTER II

THE PANORAMA OF A LOST YOUTH

As O'Connell hurried through the streets of the little village thoughts surged madly through his brain. It was in this barren spot he was born and passed his youth. Youth! A period of poverty and struggle: of empty dreams and futile hopes. It passed before him now as a panorama. There was the doctor's house where his father hurried the night he was born. How often had his mother told him of that night of storm when she gave her last gleam of strength in giving him life! In storm he was born: in strife he would live. The mark was on him.

Now he came to the little schoolhouse where he first learned to read. Facing it Father Cahill's tiny church, where he had learned to pray. Beyond lay the green on which he had his first fight. It was about his father. Bruised and bleeding, he crept home that day — beaten. His mother cried over him and washed his cuts and bathed his bruises. A flush of shame crept across his face as he thought of that beating. The result of our first battle stays with us through life. He watched his conqueror, he remembered for years. He had but one ambition in these days — to gain sufficient strength to wipe out that disgrace. He trained his muscles. He ran on the roads at early morning until his breathing was good. He made friends with an English soldier stationed in the town, by doing him some slight service. The man had learned boxing in London and could beat any one in his regiment. O'Connell asked the man to

teach him boxing. The soldier agreed. He found the boy an apt pupil. O'Connell mastered the art of self-defence. He learned the vulnerable points of attack. Then he waited his opportunity. One half-holiday, when the schoolboys were playing on the green, he walked up deliberately to his conqueror and challenged him to a return engagement. The boys crowded around them.

"Is it another batin' ye'd be afther havin', ye beggar-man's son?" said the enemy.

O'Connell's reply was a well-timed punch on that youth's jaw, and the second battle was on.

As O'Connell fought he remembered every blow of the first fight when, weak and unskilful, he was an easy prey for his victor.

"That's for the one ye gave me two years ago, Martin Quinlan," cried O'Connell, as he closed that youth's right eye, and stepped nimbly back from a furious counter.

"And it's a bloody nose ye'll have, too," as he drove his left with deadly precision on Quinlan's olfactory organ, staggering that amazed youth, who, nothing daunted, ran into a series of jabs and swings that completely dazed him and forced him to clinch to save further damage. But the fighting blood of O'Connell was up. He beat Quinlan out of the clinch with a well-timed upper-cut that put the youth upon his back on the green.

"Now take back that 'beggar-man's' son!" shouted O'Connell.

"I'll not," from the grass.

"Then get up and be beaten," screamed O'Connell. The boys danced around them. It was too good to be true. Quinlan had thrashed them all, and here was the apparently weakest of them — white-faced O'Connell —

thrashing him. Why, if O'Connell could best him, they all could. The reign of tyranny was over.

"Fight! Fight!" they shouted, as they crowded around the combatants.

Quinlan rose to his feet only to be put back again on the ground by a straight right in the mouth. He felt the warm blood against his lips and tasted the salt on his tongue. It maddened him. He staggered up and rushed with all his force against O'Connell, who stepped aside and caught Quinlan as he stumbled past full behind the ear. He pitched forward on his face and did not move. The battle was over.

"And I'll serve just the same any that sez a word against me father!"

Not a boy said a word.

"*Fighting O'Connell*" he was nicknamed that day, and "*Fighting O'Connell*" he was known years afterwards to Dublin Castle.

When he showed his mother his bruised knuckles that night and told her how he came by them, she cried again as she did two years before. Only this time they were tears of pride.

From door to door he went.

"St. Kernan's Hill at three," was all he said. Some nodded, some said nothing, others agreed volubly. On all their faces he read that they would be there.

On through the village he went until he reached the outskirts. He paused and looked around. There was the spot on which the little cabin he was born in and in which his mother died, had stood. It had long since been pulled down for improvements. Not a sign to mark the tomb of his youth. It was here they placed his father that bleak November day — here by the ditch.

It was here his father gave up the struggle. The feeble pulse ebbed. The flame died out.

The years stripped back. It seemed as yesterday. And here *he* stood grown to manhood. He needed just that reminder to stir his blood and nerve him for the ordeal of St. Kernan's Hill.

The old order was dying out in Ireland.

The days of spiritless bending to the yoke were over. It was a "Young Ireland" he belonged to and meant to lead. A "Young Ireland" with an inheritance of oppression and slavery to wipe out. A "Young Ireland" that demanded to be heard: that meant to act: that would fight step by step in the march to Westminster to compel recognition of their just claims. And he was to be one of their leaders. He squared his shoulders as he looked for the last time on the little spot of earth that once meant "Home" to him.

He took in a deep breath and muttered through his clenched teeth:

"Let the march begin to-day. Forward!" and he turned toward St. Kernan's Hill.

CHAPTER III

ST. KERNAN'S HILL

To the summit of the hill climbed up men, women and children. The men grimy and toil-worn; a look of hopelessness in their eyes: the sob of misery in their voices. Dragging themselves up after them came the women — some pressing babies to their breasts, others leading little children by the hand. The men had begged them to stay at home. There might be bad work that day, but the women had answered:

"If *we* go they won't hurt *you!*" and they pressed on after the leaders.

At three o'clock O'Connell ascended the hill and stood alone on the great mount.

A cry of greeting went up.

He raised his hand in acknowledgment.

It was strange indeed for him to stand there looking down at the people he had known since childhood. A thousand conflicting emotions swept through him as he looked at the men and women whom, only a little while ago, it seemed, he had known as children. *Then* he bent to their will. The son of a peasant, he was amongst the poorest of the poor. Now he came amongst them to try and lift them from the depths he had risen from himself.

"It is Frankie O'Connell himself," cried a voice.

"Him we knew as a baby," said another.

"Fightin' O'Connell! Hooray for him!" shouted a third.

"Mary's own child standin' up there tall and straight

to get us freedom and comfort," crooned an old white-haired woman.

"And broken heads," said another old woman.

"And lyin' in the county-jail himself, mebbe, this night," said a third.

"The Lord be with him," cried a fourth.

"Amen to that," and they reverently crossed themselves.

Again O'Connell raised his hand, this time to command silence.

All the murmurs died away.

O'Connell began — his rich, melodious voice ringing far beyond the farthest limits of the crowd — the music of his Irish brogue making cadences of entreaty and again lashing the people into fury at the memory of Ireland's wrongs.

"Irish men and women, we are met here to-day in the sight of God and in defiance of the English government," (groans and hisses), "to clasp hands, to unite our thoughts and to nerve our bodies to the supreme effort of bringing hope to despair, freedom to slavery, prosperity to the land and happiness to our homes." (Loud applause.) "Too long have our forefathers lived under the yoke of the oppressor. Too long have our old been buried in paupers' graves afther lives of misery no other counthry in the wurrld can equal. Why should it be the lot of our people — men and women born to a birthright of freedom? Why? Are ye men of Ireland so craven that aliens can rule ye as they once ruled the negro?" ("No, no!") "The African slave has been emancipated and his emancipation was through the blood and tears of the people who wronged him. Let *our* emancipation, then, be through the blood and tears of our oppressors. In other nations it is the Irishman who

rules. It is only in his own counthry that he is ruled. And the debt of hathred and misery and blasted lives and dead hopes is at our door to-day. Shall that debt be unpaid?" ("No, no!") "Look around you. Look at the faces of yer brothers and sisthers, worn and starved. Look at yer women-kind, old before they've been young. Look at the babies at their mothers' breasts, first looking out on a wurrld in which they will never know a happy thought, never feel a joyous impulse, never laugh with the honest laughther of a free and contented and God-and-government-protected people. Are yez satisfied with this?" (Angry cries of "No, no!")

"Think of yer hovels — scorched with the heat, blisthered with the wind and drenched with the rain, to live in which you toil that their owners may enjoy the fruits of yer slavery — *in other counthries.* Think of yer sons and daughthers lavin' this once fair land in hundhreds of thousands to become wage-earners across the seas, with their hearts aching for their homes and their loved ones. The fault is at our own door. The solution is in our own hands. Isn't it betther to die, pike in hand, fightin' as our forefathers did, than to rot in filth, and die, lavin' a legacy of disease and pestilence and weak brains and famished bodies?" His voice cracked and broke into a high-pitched hysterical cry as he finished the peroration.

A flame leaped through the mob. The men muttered imprecations as a new light flashed from their eyes. All their misery fell from them as a shroud. They only thought of vengeance. They were men again. Their hearts beat as their progenitors' hearts must have beaten at the Boyne.

The great upheaval that flashed star-like through Ire-

land from epoch to epoch, burned like vitriol in their veins.

The women forgot their crying babies as they pressed forward, screaming their pæan of vengeance against their oppressors.

The crowd seemed to throb as some great engine of humanity. It seemed to think with one brain, beat with one heart and call with one voice.

The cry grew into an angry roar.

Suddenly Father Cahill appeared amongst them.

"Go back to your homes," he commanded, breathlessly.

"Stay where you are," shouted O'Connell.

"In the name of the Catholic Church, go!
priest.

"In the name of our down-trodden and suff
ple, stay!" thundered O'Connell.

"Don't listen to him. Listen to the voice of
"God's help comes to those who help them
swered the agitator.

Father Cahill made his last and strongest appeal:

"My poor children, the constabulary are coming to break up the meetin' and to arrest *him*."

"Let them come," cried O'Connell. "Show them that the spirit of Irish manhood is not dead. Show them that we still have the power and the courage to defy them. Tell them we'll meet when and wher
think fit. That we'll not silence our voices while th
breath in our bodies. That we'll resist their tyranny
while we've strength to shouldher a gun or handle a pike
I appeal to you, O Irishmen, in the name of yer bro
homes; in the name of all that makes life g
death divine! In the name of yer maimed an
Of yer brothers in prison and in exile! By

earth and the watching sky I appeal to ye to make yer stand to-day. I implore ye to join yer hearts and yer lives with mine. Lift yer voices with me: stretch forth yer hands with mine and by yer hopes of happiness here and peace hereafter give an oath to heaven never to cease fightin' until freedom and light come to this unhappy land!

"Swear by all ye hold most dear: by the God who ...ve life· by the memory of all ye hold most sacred: ... the sorrow for yer women and children who have died ... hunger and heart-break: stretch forth yer hands ...d swear to give yer lives so that the generations to ...me may know happiness and peace and freedom.

...ped at the end of the adjuration, his right ... ...high above his head, his left — palm upward, ...orward in an attitude of entreaty.

...e" as though the *soul* of the man was pleading ... ...to take the oath that would bind *their* souls ...se."

...owding around him, eyes blazing, breasts heaving, as if impelled by one common thought, the men and women clamoured with outstretched hands:

"We swear!"

In that moment of exaltation it seemed as if the old Saint-Martyrs' halo glowed over each, as they took the oath that pledged them to the "*Cause*,"— the Cause that m... the lifting of oppression and tyranny: immunity f... "buckshot" and the prison-cell: from famine and ...rder and coercion — all the component parts of Ire...'s torture in her struggle for her right to self gov...

... later the crowd was hushed. A tremour ...t.

The sounds of marching troops: the unintelligible words of command, broke in on them.

Father Cahill plunged in amongst them. "The constabulary," he cried. "Back to your homes."

"Stay where you are," shouted O'Connell.

"I beg you, my children! I command you! I entreat you! Don't have bloodshed here to-day!" Father Cahill turned distractedly to O'Connell, crying out to him:

"Tell them to go back! My poor people! Tell them to go back to their homes while there's time."

Turning his back on the priest, O'Connell faced the crowd:

"You have taken your oath. Would you perjure yourselves at this old man's bidding? See where the soldiers come. Look — and look well at them. Their uniforms stand for the badge of tyranny. The glint of their muskets is the message from their illustrious sovereign of her feeling to this part of her kingdom. We ask for *justice* and they send us *bullets*. We cry for '*Liberty*' and the answer is '*Death*' at the hands of her soldiers. We accept the challenge. Put yer women and childhren behind you. Let no man move."

The men hurriedly placed the women and children so that they were protected from the first onslaught of the soldiery.

Then the men of St. Kernan's Hill, armed with huge stones and sticks, turned to meet the troops.

Mr. Roche, the resident-magistrate, rode at their head.

"Arrest that man," he cried, pointing to O'Connell.

An angry growl went up from the mob.

Father Cahill hurried to him:

"Don't interfere with them, Mr. Roche. For the love

of heaven, don't. There'll be murder here to-day if ye do."

"I have my instructions, Father Cahill, and it's sorry I am to have to act under them to-day."

"It isn't the people's fault," pleaded the priest; "indeed it isn't."

"We don't wish to hurt them. We want that man O'Connell."

"They'll never give him up. Wait till to-night and take him quietly."

"No, we'll take him here. He's given the police the slip in many parts of the country. He won't to-day." The magistrate pushed forward on his horse through the fringe on the front part of the crowd and reined up at the foot of the mount.

"Frank Owen O'Connell, I arrest you in the Queen's name for inciting peaceable citizens to violence," he called up to the agitator.

"Arrest me yerself, Mr. Magistrate Roche," replied O'Connell.

Turning to an officer Roche motioned him to seize O'Connell.

As the officer pressed forward he was felled by a blow from a heavy stick.

In a second the fight was on.

The magistrate read the riot-act.

He, together with Father Cahill, called to the mob to stop. They shouted to O'Connell to surrender and disperse the people.

Too late.

The soldiers formed into open formation and marched on the mob.

Maddened and reeling, with no order, no discipline,

with only blind fury and the rushing, pulsing blood — that has won many a battle for England against a common foe — the men of Ireland hurled themselves upon the soldiers. They threw their missiles: they struck them with their gnarled sticks: they beat them with their clenched fists.

The order to "Fire" was given as the soldiers fell back from the onslaught.

When the smoke cleared away the ranks of the mob were broken. Some lay dead on the turf; some groaned in the agony of shattered limbs. The women threw themselves moaning on the bodies. Silence fell like a pall over the mob. Out of the silence a low angry growl went up. O'Connell had fallen too.

The soldiers surrounded his prostrate body.

The mob made a rush forward to rescue him. O'Connell stopped them with a cry:

"Enough for to-day, my men." He pointed to the wounded and dying: "Live to avenge them. Wait until 'The Day'!" His voice failed. He fell back unconscious.

Into the midst of the crowd and through the ranks of the soldiers suddenly rode a young girl, barely twenty years old. Beside her was a terrified groom. She guided her horse straight to the magistrate. He raised his hat and muttered a greeting, with a glance of recognition.

"Have him taken to 'The Gap,'" she said imperatively, pointing to the motionless body of O'Connell.

"He is under arrest," replied the magistrate.

"Do you want another death on your hands? Haven't you done enough in killing and maiming those unfortunate people?" She looked with pity on the

moaning women: and then with contempt on the officer who gave the order to fire.

"You ought to be proud of your work to-day!" she said.

"I only carried out my orders," replied the man humbly.

"Have that man taken to my brother's house. He will surrender him or go bail for him until he has been attended to. First let us *save* him." The girl dismounted and made a litter of some fallen branches, assisted by the groom.

"Order some of your men to carry him."

There was a note of command in her tone that awed both the officer and the magistrate.

Four men were detailed to carry the body on the litter.

The girl remounted. Turning to the magistrate, she said:

"Tell your government, Mr. Roche, that their soldiers shot down these unarmed people." Then she wheeled round to the mob:

"Go back to your homes." She pointed to the dead and wounded: "*They* have died or been maimed for their Cause. Do as *he* said," pointing to the unconscious O'Connell, "*Live* for it!"

She started down through the valley, followed by the litter-bearers and the magistrate.

The officer gave the word of command, and, with some of the ringleaders in their midst, the soldiers marched away.

Left alone with their dying and their dead, all the ferocity left the poor, crushed peasants.

They knelt down sobbing over the motionless bodies.

For the time being the Law and its officers were triumphant.

This was the act of the representatives of the English government in the year of civilisation 18—, and in the reign of her late Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, by the grace of God, Empress of India.

CHAPTER IV

NATHANIEL KINGSNORTH VISITS IRELAND

While the incidents of the foregoing chapters were taking place, the gentleman whose ownership shaped the destinies of many of the agitators of St. Kernan's Hill, was confronting almost as difficult a problem as O'Connell was facing on the mount.

Whilst O'Connell was pleading for the right of Ireland to govern herself, Mr. Nathaniel Kingsnorth was endeavouring to understand how to manage so unwieldy and so troublesome an estate.

The death of his father placed a somewhat extensive — and so far entirely unprofitable — portion of the village in his care. His late father had complained all his life of the depreciation of values; the growing reluctance to pay rents; and the general dying-out of the worth of an estate that had passed into the hands of a Kingsnorth many generations before in the ordinary course of business, for notes that had not been taken up, and mortgages that had been foreclosed.

It was the open boast of the old gentleman that he had never seen the village, and it was one of his dying gratifications that he would never have to.

He had all the racial antipathy of a certain type of Englishmen to anything *Irish*. The word itself was unpleasant to his ears. He never heard it without a shudder, and his intimates, at his request, refrained from using it in his presence. The word represented to him all that was unsavoury, unpatriotic and unprincipled.

One phrase of his, in speaking of Ireland at a ban-

quet, achieved the dignity of being printed in all the great London daily papers and was followed by a splenetic attack in the "Irish Nation." Both incidents pleased the old gentleman beyond measure. It was an unfailing source of gratification to him that he had coined the historical utterance. He quoted it with a grim chuckle on the few occasions when some guest, unfamiliar with his prejudice, would mention in his presence the hated word "Ireland."

It appears that one particularly hard winter, when, for some unnecessary and wholly unwarrantable reason, the potato-crop had failed, and the little Irish village was in a condition of desperate distress, it was found impossible to collect more than a tithe of Mr. Kingsnorth's just dues. No persuasion could make the obstinate tenants pay their rents. Threats, law-proceedings, evictions — all were useless. They simply would not pay. His agent finally admitted himself beaten. Mr. Kingsnorth must wait for better times.

Furious at his diminished income and hating, with a bitter hatred, the disloyal and cheating tenantry, he rose at a Guildhall banquet to reply to the toast of "The Colonies."

He drew vivid pictures of the splendour of the British possessions: of India — that golden and loyal Empire; Australia with its hidden mines of wealth, whose soil had scarce been scratched, peopled by patriotic, zealous and toiling millions, honestly paying their way through life by the sweat of their God-and-Queen-fearing brows. What an example to the world! A country where the wage-earner hurried, with eager footsteps, to place the honestly earned tolls at the feet of generous and trusting landlords!

Then, on the other hand, he pointed to that small por-

tion of the British Isles, where to pay rent was a crime: where landlords were but targets for insult and vituperation — yes, and indeed for *bullets* from the hidden assassin whenever they were indiscreet enough to visit a country where laws existed but that they might be broken, and crime stalked fearlessly through the land. Such a condition was a reproach to the English government.

"Why," he asked the astonished gathering of dignitaries, "why should such a condition exist when three hundred and sixty-five men sat in the House of Commons, sent there by electors to administer the just and wise laws of a just and wise country? Why?"

As he paused and glared around the table for the reply that was not forthcoming, the undying phrase sprang new-born from his lips:

"Oh," he cried; "oh! that for one brief hour Providence would immerse that island of discontent beneath the waters of the Atlantic and destroy a people who seemed bent on destroying themselves and on disintegrating the majesty and dignity and honour of our great Empire!"

Feeling that no words of his could follow so marvellous a climax, he sat down, amid a silence that seemed to him to be fraught with eloquence, so impressive and significant was — to him — its full meaning. Some speeches are cheered vulgarly. It was the outward sign of coarse approval. Others are enjoyed and sympathised with inwardly, and the outward tribute to which was silence — and that was the tribute of that particular Guildhall gathering on that great night.

It seemed to Wilberforce Kingsnorth, hardened after-dinner speaker though he was, that never had a body of men such as he confronted and who met his gaze by drop-

ping their eyes modestly to their glasses, been so genuinely thrilled by so original, so comprehensive and so dramatic a conclusion to a powerful appeal.

Kingsnorth felt, as he sat down, that it was indeed a red-letter night for him — and for England.

The Times, in reviewing the speeches the following morning, significantly commented that:

"Mr. Kingsnorth had solved, in a moment of entreaty, to a hitherto indifferent Providence, the entire Irish difficulty."

When Nathaniel Kingsnorth found himself the fortunate possessor of this tract of land peopled by so lawless a race, he determined to see for himself what the conditions really were, so for the first time since they owned a portion of it, a Kingsnorth set foot on Irish soil.

Accompanied by his two sisters he arrived quietly some few weeks before and addressed himself at once to the task of understanding the people and the circumstances in which they lived.

On this particular afternoon he was occupied with his agent, going systematically through the details of the management of the estate.

It was indeed a discouraging prospect. Such a condition of pauperism seemed incredible in a village within a few hours of his own England. Except for a few moderately thriving tradesmen, the whole population seemed to live from hand to mouth. The entire village was in debt. They owed the landlords, the tradesmen, they even owed each other money and goods. It seemed to be a community cut off from the rest of the world, in which nothing from the *outside* ever entered. No money was ever *put into* the village. On the contrary there was a continuous withdrawal. By present standards a day would come when the last coin would depart and the fa-

veured spot would be as independent of money as many of the poorer people were of clothing.

It came as a shock to Nathaniel Kingsnorth. For the first time it began to dawn on him that, after all, the agitators might really have some cause to agitate: that their attitude was not one of merely fighting for the sake of the fight. Yet a lingering suspicion, borne of his early training, and his father's doctrines about Ireland, that Pat was really a scheming, dishonest fellow, obtruded itself on his mind, even as he became more than half convinced of the little village's desperate plight.

Nathaniel loathed injustice. As the magistrate of his county he punished dishonesty. Was the condition he saw due to English injustice or Irish dishonesty? That was the problem that he was endeavouring to solve.

"There doesn't seem to be a sixpence circulating through the whole place," he remarked to the agent when that gentleman had concluded his statement of the position of matters.

"And there never will be, until some one puts money *into* the village instead of *taking it out* of it," said the agent.

"You refer to the land-owners?"

"I do. And it's many's the time I wrote your father them same words."

"It is surely not unnatural for owners to expect to be paid for the use of houses and land, is it? We expect it in England," said Kingsnorth drily.

"In England the landlord usually lives on his estate and takes some pride in it."

"Small pride anyone could take in such an estate as this," Kingsnorth laughed bitterly. Then he went on: "And as for *living* on it —," and he shrugged his shoulders in disgust.

"Before the Kingsnorths came into possession the MacMahons lived on it, and proud the people were of them and they of the people, sir."

"I wish to God they'd continued to," said Kingsnorth wrathfully.

"They beggared themselves for the people — that's what they did, sir. Improvements here — a road there. A quarry cut to give men work and a breakwater built to keep the sea from washing away the poor fishermen's homes. And when famine came not a penny rent asked — and their women-kind feedin' and nursin' the starvin' and the sick. An' all the time raisin' money to do it. A mortgage on this and a note of hand for that — until the whole place was plastered with debt. Then out they were turned."

The agent moved away and looked out across the well-trimmed lawn to conceal his emotion.

"Ill-timed charity and business principles scarcely go together, my good Burke," said Kingsnorth, with ill-concealed impatience. He did not like this man's tone. It suggested a glorification of the former *bankrupt* landlord and a lack of appreciation of the present *solvent* one.

"So the English think," Burke answered.

Kingsnorth went on: "If we knew the whole truth we would probably find the very methods these people used were the cause of the sorry condition this village is in now. No landlord has the right to pauperise his tenantry by giving them money and their homes rent-free. It is a man's duty and privilege to *work*. *Independence* — that is what a man should aim at. The Irish are always *crying* for it. They never seem to *practise* it."

"Ye can't draw the water out of a kettle and expect it to boil, sir, and by the same token independence is a fine thing to tache to men who are dependent on all."

"Your sympathies appear to be entirely with the people," said Kingsnorth, looking shrewdly and suspiciously at the agent.

"No one could live here man and boy and not give it to them," answered Burke.

"You're frank, anyway."

"Pity there are not more like me, sir."

"I'll see what it is possible to do in the matter of improving conditions. Mind — I promise nothing. I put my tenants on probation. It seems hopeless. I'll start works for the really needy. If they show a desire to take advantage of my interest in them I'll extend my operations. If they do *not* I'll stop everything and put the estate on the market."

Burke looked at him and smiled a dry, cracked smile.

He was a thin, active, grizzled man, well past fifty, with keen, shrewd eyes that twinkled with humour, or sparkled with ferocity, or melted with sorrow as the mood seized him. As he answered Kingsnorth the eyes twinkled.

"I'm sure it's grateful the poor people 'ull be when they hear the good news of yer honour's interest in them."

"I hope so. Although history teaches us that gratitude is not a common quality in Ireland. 'If an Irishman is being roasted you will always find another Irishman to turn the spit,' a statesman quoted in the House of Commons a few nights ago."

"That must be why the same statesman puts them in prison for standin' by each other, I suppose," said Burke, with a faint smile.

"You are now speaking of the curses of this country — the agitators. They are the real cause of this deplorable misery. Who will put money into a country that is

ridden by these scoundrels? Rid Ireland of agitators and you advance her prosperity a hundred years. They are the clogs on the wheel of a nation's progress." He picked up a copy of the local newspaper and read a headline from one of the columns:

"I see you have agitators even here?"

"We have, sir."

"Drive them out of the town. Let the people live their own lives without such disturbing elements in them. Tell them distinctly that from the moment they begin to work for me I'll have no 'meetings' on my property. Any of my tenants or workmen found attending them elsewhere will be evicted and discharged."

"I'll tell them, sir."

"I mean to put that kind of lawlessness down with a firm hand."

"If ye *do* ye'll be the first, Mr. Kingsnorth."

"There is one I see to-day," glancing again at the paper.

"There is, sir."

"Who is this man O'Connell?"

"A native of the village, sir."

"What is he — a paid agitator?"

"Faith there's little pay he gets, I'm thinkin'."

"Why don't the police arrest him?"

"Mebbe they will, sir."

"I'll see that they do."

Burke smiled.

"And what do you find so amusing, Mr. Burke?"

"It's a wondher the English government doesn't get tired of arrestin' them. As fast as they *do* others take their place. It's the persecution brings fresh converts to the 'Cause.' Put one man in jail and there'll be a hundred new followers the next day."

"We'll see," said Kingsnorth firmly. "Here is one district where the law will be enforced. These meetings and their frequent bloodshed are a disgrace to a civilised people."

"Ye may well say that, yer honour," replied Burke.

"Before I invest one penny to better the condition of the people I must have their pledge to abandon such disgraceful methods of trying to enlist sympathy. I'll begin with this man O'Connell. Have him brought to me to-morrow. I'll manage this estate my own way or I'll wash my hands of it. My father was often tempted to."

"He resisted the temptation though, sir."

"I'm sorry he did. That will do for to-day. Leave these statements. I'll go over them again. It's hard to make head or tail of the whole business. Be here to-morrow at ten. Bring that fellow O'Connell with you. Also give me a list of some of the more intelligent and trustworthy of the people and I'll sound them as to the prospects of opening up work here. Drop them a hint that my interest is solely on the understanding that this senseless agitation stops."

"I will, sir. To-morrow morning at ten," and Burke started for the door.

"Oh, and — Burke — I hope you are more discreet with my tenants than you have been with me?"

"In what way, Mr. Kingsnorth?"

"I trust that you confine your sympathy with them to your *feelings* and not give expression to them in words."

"I can't say that I do, Mr. Kingsnorth."

"It would be wiser to in future, Mr. Burke."

"Well, ye see, sir, I'm a *man* first and an *agent* afterwards."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir. It's many's the ugly thing I've had to do for your father, and if a kind word of mine hadn't gone with it, it's precious little of the estate would be fit to look at to-day, Mr. Kingsnorth."

"And why not?"

"Do ye remember when Kilkee's Scotch steward evicted two hundred in one day, sir?"

"I do not."

"Rade about it. It's very enlightenin'."

"What happened?"

"The poor wretched, evicted people burnt down every dwellin' and tree on the place, sir."

"I would know how to handle such ruffians."

"That's what Kilkee thought. 'Tache them a lesson,' said he. 'Turn them into the ditches!' And he *did*. *He* thought he *knew* how to handle them. He woke up with a jump one mornin' when he found a letter from the under-steward tellin' him his Scotch master was in the hospital with a bullet in his spleen, and the beautiful house and grounds were just so much blackened ashes."

"It seems to me, my good man, there is a note of agreement with such methods, in your tone."

"Manin' the evictin' or the burnin', yer honour?"

"You know what I mean," and Kingsnorth's voice rose angrily.

"I think I do," answered Burke quietly.

"I want an agent who is devoted to my interests and to whom the people are secondary."

"Then ye'd betther send to England for one, sir. The men devoted to landlords and against the people are precious few in this part of Ireland, sir."

"Do you intend that I should act on that?"

"If ye wish. Ye can have my *time* at a price, but ye

won't have my *independence* for any sum ye like to offer."

"Very well. Send me your resignation, to take effect one month from to-day."

"It's grateful I am, Mr. Kingsnorth," and he went out.

In through the open window came the sound of the tramping of many feet and the whisper of subdued voices.

Kingsnorth hurried out on to the path and saw a number of men and women walking slowly down the drive, in the centre of which the soldiers were carrying a body on some branches. Riding beside them was his sister Angela with her groom.

"What new horror is this?" he thought, as he hurried down the path to meet the procession.

CHAPTER V

ANGELA

Wilberforce Kingsnorth left three children: Nathaniel — whose acquaintance we have already made, and who in a large measure inherited much of his father's dominant will and hardheadedness — Monica, the elder daughter, and Angela the younger.

Nathaniel was the old man's favourite.

While still a youth he inculcated into the boy all the tenets of business, morality and politics that had made Wilberforce prosperous.

Pride in his name: a sturdy grasp of life: an unbending attitude toward those beneath him, and an abiding reverence for law and order and fealty to the throne — these were the foundations on which the father built Nathaniel's character.

Next in point of regard came the elder daughter Monica. Patrician of feature, haughty in manner, exclusive by nature she had the true Kingsnorth air. She had no disturbing "ideas": no yearning for things not of her station. She was contented with the world as it had been made for her and seemed duly proud and grateful to have been born a Kingsnorth.

She was an excellent musician: rode fairly to hounds: bestowed prizes at the local charities with grace and distinction — as became a Kingsnorth — and looked coldly out at the world from behind the impenetrable barriers of an old name.

When she married Frederick Chichester, the rising

barrister, connected with six county families, it was a proud day for old Kingsnorth.

His family had originally made their money in trade. The Chichesters had accumulated a fortune by professions.

The distinction in England is marked.

One hesitates to acknowledge the salutation of the man who provides one with the necessities of life: a hearty handshake is occasionally extended to those who minister to one's luxuries.

In England the law is one of the most expensive of luxuries and its devotees command the highest regard.

Frederick Chichester came of a long line of illustrious lawyers — one had even reached the distinction of being made a judge. He belonged to an honourable profession.

Chichesters had made the laws of the country in the House of Commons as well as administered them in the Courts.

The old man was overjoyed.

He made a handsome settlement on his eldest daughter on her marriage and felt he had done well by her, even as she had by him.

His son and elder daughter were distinctly a credit to him.

Five years after Monica's birth Angela unexpectedly was born to the Kingsnorths.

A delicate, sickly infant, it seemed as if the splendid blood of the family had expended its vigour on the elder children.

Angela needed constant attention to keep her alive. From tremulous infancy she grew into delicate youth. None of the strict standards Kingsnorth had used so

effectually with his other children applied to her. She seemed a child apart.

Not needing her, Kingsnorth did not love her. He gave her a form of tolerant affection.

Too fragile to mix with others, she was brought up at home. Tutors furnished her education. The winters she passed abroad with her mother. When her mother died she spent them with relations or friends. The grim dampness of the English climate was too rigorous for a life that needed sunshine.

Angela had nothing in common with either her brother or her sister. She avoided them and they her. They did not understand her: she understood them only too well!

A nature that craved for sympathy and affection — as the frail so often do — was repulsed by those to whom affection was but a *form*, and sympathy a term of reproach.

She loved all that was beautiful, and, as so frequently happens in such natures as Angela's, she had an overwhelming pity for all that were unhappy. To her God made the world beautiful: man was responsible for its hideousness. From her heart she pitied mankind for abusing the gifts God had showered on them.

It was on her first home-coming since her mother's death that her attention was really drawn to her father's Irish possessions.

By a curious coincidence she returned home the day following Wilberforce Kingsnorth's electrical speech, invoking Providence to interpose in the settlement of the Irish difficulty. It was the one topic of conversation throughout dinner. And it was during that dinner that Angela for the first time really angered her father and

raised a barrier between them that lasted until the day of his death.

The old man had laughed coarsely at the remembrance of his speech on the previous night, and licked his lips at the thought of it.

Monica, who was visiting her father for a few days, smiled in agreeable sympathy.

Nathaniel nodded cheerfully.

From her father's side Angela asked quietly:

"Have you ever been in Ireland, father?"

"No, I have not," answered the old man sharply. "And, what is more, I never intend to go there."

"Do you know anything about the Irish?" persisted Angela.

"*Do* I? More than the English government does. Don't I own land there?"

"I mean do you know anything about the people?" insisted Angela.

"I know them to be a lot of thieving, rascally scoundrels, too lazy to work, and too dishonest to pay their way, even when they have the money."

"Is that *all* you know?"

"*All?*" He stopped eating to look angrily at his daughter. The cross-examination was not to his liking.

Angela went on:

"Yes, father; is that *all* you know about the Irish?"

"Isn't it *enough?*" His voice rose shrilly. It was the first time for years anyone had dared use those two hated words "*Ireland*" and "*Irish*" at his table. Angela must be checked and at once.

Before he could begin to check her, however, Angela answered his question:

"It wouldn't be enough for me if I had the responsi

bilities and duties of a landlord. To be the owner of an estate should be to act as the people's friend, their father, their adviser in times of plenty and their comrade in times of sorrow."

"Indeed? And pray where did you learn all that, Miss?" asked the astonished parent.

Without noticing the interruption or the question, Angela went on:

"Why deny a country its own government when England is practically governed by its countrymen? Is there any position of prominence to-day in England that isn't filled by Irishmen? Think. Our Commander-in-Chief is Irish: our Lord High Admiral is Irish: there are the defences of the English in the hands of two Irishmen and yet you call them thieving and rascally scoundrels."

Kingsnorth tried to speak; Angela raised her voice:

"Turn to your judges — the Lord Chief is an Irishman. Look at the House of Commons. Our laws are passed or defeated by the Irish vote, and yet so blindly ignorant and obstinate is our insular prejudice that we refuse them the favours they do us — governing *themselves* as well as *England*."

Kingsnorth looked at his daughter aghast. Treason in his own house! His child speaking the two most hated of all words at his own dinner table and in laudatory terms. He could scarcely believe it. He looked at her a moment and then thundered:

"How dare you! How dare you!"

Angela smiled a little amusedly-tolerant smile as she looked frankly at her father and answered:

"This is exactly the old-fashioned tone we English take to anything we don't understand. And that is why other countries are leaving us in the race. There is a nation living within a few hours' journey from our doors,

yet millions of English people are as ignorant of them as if they lived in Senegambia." She paused, looked once more straight into her father's eyes and said: "And you, father, seem to be as ignorant as the worst of them!"

"Angela!" cried her sister in horror.

Nathaniel laughed good-naturedly, leaned across to Angela and said:

"I see our little sister has been reading the sensational magazines. Yes?"

"I've done more than that," replied Angela. "In Nice a month ago were two English members of Parliament who had taken the trouble to visit the country they were supposed to assist in governing. They told me that a condition of misery existed throughout the whole of Ireland that was incredible under a civilised government."

"Radicals, eh?" snapped her father.

"No. Conservatives. One of them had once held the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland and was Ireland's most bitter persecutor, until he visited the country. When he saw the wretchedness of her people he stopped his stringent methods and began casting about for some ways of lessening the poor people's torment."

"The more shame to him to talk like that to a girl. And what's more you had no right to listen to him. A Conservative indeed! A fine one he must be!"

"He is. I don't see why the Liberal party should have all the enlightenment and the Conservative party all the bigotry."

"Don't anger your father," pleaded Monica.

"Why, little Angela has come back to us quite a revolutionary," said Nathaniel.

"Leave the table," shouted her father.

Without a word Angela got up quietly and left the room. Her manner was entirely unmoved. She had spoken from her inmost convictions. The fact that they were opposed to her father was immaterial. She loathed tyranny and his method of shutting the mouths of those who disagreed with him was particularly obnoxious to her. It was also most ineffectual with her. From childhood she had always spoken as she felt. No discipline checked her. Freedom of speech as well as freedom of thought were as natural and essential to her as breathing was.

From that time she saw but little of her father. When he died he left her to her brother's care. Kingsnorth made no absolute provision for her. She was to be dependent on Nathaniel. When the time came that she seemed to wish to marry, if her brother approved of the match, he should make a handsome settlement on her.

In response to her request Nathaniel allowed her to go with him to Ireland on his tour of inspection.

Mr. Chichester was actively engaged at the Old Bailey on an important criminal case, so Monica also joined them.

Everything Angela saw in Ireland appealed to her quick sympathy and gentle heart. It was just as she had thought and read and listened to. On every side she saw a kindly people borne down by the weight of poverty. Lives ruined by sickness and the lack of nourishment. A splendid race perishing through misgovernment and intolerant ignorance.

Angela went about amongst the people and made friends with them. They were chary at first of taking her to their hearts. She was of the hated Saxon race. What was she doing there, she, the sister of their till

now, absentee landlord? She soon won them over by her appealing voice and kindly interest.

All this Angela did in direct opposition to her brother's wishes and her sister's exhortations.

The morning of the meeting she had ridden some miles to visit a poor family. Out of five three were in bed with low fever. She got a doctor for them, gave them money to buy necessities and, with a promise to return the next day, she rode away.

When within some little distance of her brother's house she saw a steady, irregular stream of people climbing a great hill. She rode toward it, and, screened by a clump of trees, saw and heard the meeting.

When O'Connell first spoke his voice thrilled her. Gradually the excitement of the people under the mastery of his power, communicated itself to her. It pulsed in her blood, and throbbed in her brain. For the first time she realised what a marvellous force was the Call of the Patriot. To listen and watch a man risking life and liberty in the cause of his country. Her heart, and her mind and her soul went out to him.

When the soldiers marched on to the scene she was paralysed with fear. When the order to fire was given she wanted to ride into their midst and cry out to them to stop. But she was unable to move hand or foot.

When the smoke had thinned and she saw the bodies lying motionless on the ground of men who a moment before had been full of life and strength: when was added to that the horror of the wounded crying out with pain, her first impulse was to fly from the sight of the carnage. She mastered that moment of fear and plunged forward, calling to the groom to follow her.

What immediately followed has already been told.

The long, slow, tortuous journey home: the men slowly

following with the ghastly mute-body on the rude litter, became a living memory to her for all the remainder of her life.

She glanced down every little while at the stone-white face and shuddered as she found herself wondering if she would ever hear his voice again or see those great blue-grey eyes flash with his fierce courage and devotion.

Once only did the lips of the wounded man move. In a moment Angela had dismounted and halted the soldiers. As she bent down over him O'Connell swooned again from pain.

The procession went on.

As they neared her brother's house, stragglers began to follow curiously. Sad looking men and weary women joined the procession wonderingly. All guessed it was some fresh outrage of the soldiers.

Little, ragged, old-young children peered down at the body on the litter and either ran away crying or joined in listlessly with the others.

It was an old story carrying back mutilated men to the village. None was surprised.

It seemed to Angela that an infinity of time had passed before they entered the grounds attached to the Kingsnorth house.

She sent a man on ahead to order a room to be prepared and a doctor sent for.

As she saw her brother coming forward to meet her with knit brows and stern eyes she nerved herself to greet him.

"What is this, Angela?" he asked, looking in amazement at the strange procession.

"Another martyr to our ignorant government, Nathaniel," and she pressed on through the drive to the house.

CHAPTER VI

ANGELA SPEAKS HER MIND FREELY TO NATHANIEL

NATHANIEL's indignation at his sister's conduct was beyond bounds when he learnt who the wounded man was. He ordered the soldiers to take the man and themselves away.

The magistrate interposed and begged him to at least let O'Connell rest there until a doctor could patch him up. It might be dangerous to take him back without medical treatment. He assured Nathaniel that the moment they could move him he would be lodged in the county-jail.

Nathaniel went back to his study as the sorry procession passed on to the front door.

He sent immediately for his sister.

The reply came back that she would see him at dinner.

He commanded her to come to him at once.

In a few minutes Angela came into the room. She was deathly pale. Her voice trembled as she spoke:

"What do you want?"

"Why did you bring that man here?"

"Because he is wounded."

"Such scoundrels are better dead."

"I don't think so. Nor do I think him a scoundrel."

"He came here to attack landlords — to attack *me*. *Me!* And *you* bring him to *my* house and with that *rabble*. It's outrageous! Monstrous!"

"I couldn't leave him with those heartless wretches to die in their hands."

"He leaves here the moment a doctor has attended him."

"Very well. Is that all?"

"No, it isn't!" Kingsnorth tried to control his anger. After a pause he continued:

"I want no more of these foolhardy, quixotic actions of yours. I've heard of your visiting these wretched people — going into fever dens. Is that conduct becoming your name? Think a little of your station in life and what it demands."

"I wish *you* did a little more."

"What?" he shouted, all his anger returned.

"There's no need to raise your voice," Angela answered quietly. "I am only a few feet away. I repeat that I wish you thought a little more of your obligations. If you *did* and others like you in the same position you are in, there would be no such horrible scenes as I saw to-day; a man shot down amongst his own people for speaking the truth."

"You *saw* it?" Nathaniel asked in dismay.

"I did. I not only *saw*, but I *heard*. I wish you had, too. I heard a man lay bare his heart and his brain and his soul that others might know the light in them. I saw and heard a man offer up his life that others might know some gleam of happiness in *their* lives. It was wonderful! It was heroic! It was God-like!"

"If I ever hear of you doing such a thing again, you shall go back to London the next day."

"That sounds exactly as though my dead father were speaking."

"I'll not be made a laughing-stock by you."

"You make yourself one as your father did before you. A Kingsnorth! What has your name meant? Because one of our forefathers cheated the world into giving him a

fortune, by buying his goods for more than they were worth, we have tried to canonise him and put a halo around the name of Kingsnorth. To me it stands for all that is mean and selfish and vain and ignorant. The power of money over intellect. How did we become owners of this miserable piece of land? A Kingsnorth swindled its rightful owner. Lent him money on usury, bought up his bills and his mortgages and when he couldn't pay foreclosed on him. No wonder there's a curse on the village and on us!"

Kingsnorth tried to speak, but she stopped him:

"Wait a moment. It was a good stroke of business taking this estate away. Oh yes, it was a good stroke of business. Our name has been built up on 'good strokes of business.' Well, I tell you it's a *bad* stroke of business when human lives are put into the hands of such creatures as we Kingsnorths have proved ourselves!"

"Stop!" cried Nathaniel, outraged to the innermost sanctuary of his being. "Stop! You don't speak like one of our family. It is like listening to some heretic — some —"

"I don't feel like one of your family. *You* are a *Kingsnorth*. *I* am my *mother's* child. My poor, gentle, patient mother, who lived a life of unselfish resignation: who welcomed death, when it came to her, as a release from tyranny. Don't call *me* a Kingsnorth. I know the family too well. I know all the name means to the people who have suffered through *your family*."

"After this — the best thing — the only thing — is to separate," said Nathaniel.

"Whenever you wish."

"I'll make you an allowance."

"Don't let it be a burden."

"I've never been so shocked — so stunned —"

"I am glad. From my cradle I've been shocked and stunned — in my home. It's some compensation to know you are capable of the feeling, too. Frankly, I didn't think you were."

"We'll talk no more of this," and Nathaniel began to pace the room.

"I am finished," and Angela went to the door.

"It would be better we didn't meet again — in any event — not often," added Nathaniel.

"Thank you," said Angela, opening the door. He motioned her to close it, that he had something more to say.

"We'll find you some suitable chaperone. You can spend your winters abroad, as you have been doing. London for the season — until you're suitably married. I'll follow out my father's wishes to the letter. You shall be handsomely provided for the day you marry."

She closed the door with a snap and came back to him and looked him steadily in the eyes.

"The man I marry shall take nothing from you. Even in his 'last will and testament' my father proved himself a *Kingsnorth*. It was only a *Kingsnorth* could make his youngest daughter dependent on *you!*"

"My father knew I would respect his wishes."

"He was equally responsible for me, yet he leaves me to *your* care. A Kingsnorth!

"The men *masters* and the women *slaves!*

"That is the Kingsnorth doctrine.

"It is a pity our father didn't live a little longer. There are many changes coming into this old grey world of ours and one of them is the *real, honourable* position of woman. The day will come in England when we will wring from our fathers and our brothers as our right what is doled out to us now as though we were beggars.

"And they are trying to govern the country of Ireland in the same way. The reign of the despot. Well, *that* is nearly over too — even as woman's degrading position to-day is almost at an end."

"Have you finished?"

Once again Angela went to the door. Nathaniel said in a somewhat changed tone:

"As it is your wish this man should be cared for, I'll do it. When he is well enough to be moved, the magistrate will take him to jail. But, for the little while we shall be here, I beg you not to do anything so unseemly again."

A servant came in to tell Angela the doctor had come. Without a word Angela went out to see to the wounded man.

The servant followed her.

Left alone, Nathaniel sat down, shocked and stunned, to review the interview he had just had with his youngest sister.

CHAPTER VII

THE WOUNDED PATRIOT

When Angela entered the sick-room she found Dr. McGinnis, a cheery, bright-eyed, rotund little man of fifty, talking freely to the patient and punctuating each speech with a hearty laugh. His good-humour was infectious.

The wounded agitator felt the effect of it and was trying to laugh feebly himself.

"Sure it's the fine target ye must have made with yer six feet and one inch. How could the poor soldiers help hittin' ye? Answer me that?" and the jovial doctor laughed again as he dexterously wound a bandage around O'Connell's arm.

"Aisy now while I tie the bandage, me fine fellow. Ye'll live to see the inside of an English jail yet."

He turned as he heard the door open and greeted Angela.

"Good afternoon to ye, Miss Kingsnorth. Faith, it's a blessin' ye brought the boy here. There's no tellin' what the prison-surgeon would have done to him. It is saltpetre, they tell me, the English doctors rub into the Irish wounds, to kape them smartin'. And, by the like token, they do the same too in the English House of Commons. Saltpetre in Ireland's wounds is what they give us."

"Is he much hurt?" asked Angela.

"Well, they've broken nothin'. Just blackened his face and made a few holes in his skin. It's buckshot they used. Buckshot! Thank the merciful Mr. Forster

for that same. 'Buckshot-Forster,' as the Irish reverently call him."

Angela flushed with indignation as she looked at the crippled man.

"What a dastardly thing to do," she cried.

"Ye may well say that, Miss Kingsnorth," said the merry little doctor. "But it's betther than a bullet from a Martini-Henry rifle, that's what it is. And there's many a poor English landlord's got one of 'em in the back for ridin' about at night on his own land. It's a fatherly government we have, Miss Kingsnorth. 'Hurt 'em, but don't quite kill 'em,' sez they; 'and then put 'em in jail and feed them on bread and wather. That'll take the fine talkin' and patriotism out of them,' sez they."

"They'll never take it out of me. They may kill me, perhaps, but until they do they'll never silence me," murmured O'Connell in a voice so low, yet so bitter, that it startled Angela.

"Ye'll do that all in good time, me fine boy," said the busy little doctor. "Here, take a pull at this," and he handed the patient a glass in which he had dropped a few crystals into some water.

As O'Connell drank the mixture Dr. McGinnis said in a whisper to Angela:

"Let him have that every three hours: oftener if he wants to talk. We've got to get his mind at rest. A good sleep'll make a new man of him."

"There's no danger?" asked Angela in the same tone.

"None in the wurrld. He's got a fine constitution and mebbe the buckshot was pretty clean. I've washed them out well."

"To think of men shot down like dogs for speaking of their country. It's horrible! It's wicked! It's monstrous."

"Faith, the English don't know what else to do with them, Miss. It's no use arguin' with the like of him. That man lyin' on that bed 'ud talk the hind-foot off a heifer. The only way to kape the likes of him quiet is to shoot him, and begob they have."

"I heard you, doctor," came from the bed. "If they'd killed me to-day there would be a thousand voices would rise all over Ireland to take the place of mine. One martyr makes countless converts."

"Faith, I'd rather kape me own life than to have a hundred thousand spakin' for me and me dead. Where's the good that would be doin' me? Now kape still there all through the beautiful night, and let the blessed medicine quiet ye and the coolin' ointment aize yer pain. I'll come in by-and-by on the way back nome. I'm goin' up beyant '*The Gap*' to some poor people with the fever. But I'll be back."

"Thank you, Dr. McGinnis."

"Is it long yer stayin' here?" and the little man picked up his hat.

"I don't know," said Angela. "I hardly think so."

"Well, it's you they'll miss when ye're gone, Miss Kingsnorth. Faith if all the English were like you this sort of thing couldn't happen."

"We don't try to understand the people, doctor. We just govern them blindly and ignorantly."

"Faith it's small blame to the English. We're a mighty hard race to make head nor tail of. And that's a fact. Prayin' at Mass one minnit and mainin' cattle the next. Cryin' salt tears at the bedside of a sick child and lavin' it to shoot a poor man in the ribs for darin' to ask for his rint."

"They're not *Irishmen*," came from the sick bed.

"Faith and they are *now*. And it's small wondher

the men who sit in Whitehall in London trate them like savages."

"I've seen things since I've been here that would justify almost anything!" cried Angela. "I've seen suffering no one in England dreamt of. Misery, that London, with all its poverty and wretchedness, could not compare with. Were I born in Ireland I should be proud to stake my liberty and my life to protect my own people from such horrible brutality."

The wounded man opened his eyes and looked full at Angela. It was a look at once of gratitude and reverence and admiration.

Her heart leaped within her.

So far no man in the little walled-in zone she had lived in had ever stirred her to an even momentary enthusiasm. They were all so fatuously contented with their environment. Sheltered from birth, their anxiety was chiefly how to make life pass the pleasantest. They occasionally showed a spasmodic excitement over the progress of a cricket or polo match. Their achievements were largely those of the stay-at-home warriors who fought with the quill what others faced death with the sword for. Their inertia disgusted her. Their self-satisfaction spurred her to resentment.

Here was a man in the real heart of life. He was engaged in a struggle that makes existence worth while — the effort to bring a message to his people.

How all the conversations she was forced to listen to in her narrow world rose up before her in their carping meannesses! Her father's brutal diatribes against a people, unfortunate enough to be compelled, from force of circumstance, to live on a portion of land that belonged to him, yet in whose lives he took no interest whatsoever. His only anxiety was to be paid his

rents. How, and through what misery, his tenants scraped the money together to do it with, mattered nothing to him. All that *did* matter was that he *must be paid.*

Then arose a picture of her sister Monica, with her puny social pretensions. Recognition of those in a higher grade bread and meat and drink to her. Adulation and gross flattery the very breath of her nostrils.

Her brother's cheap, narrow platitudes about the rights of rank and wealth.

To Angela wealth had no rights except to bring happiness to the world. It seemed to bring only misery once people acquired it. Grim sorrow seemed to stalk in the trail of the rich.

She could not recall one moment of real, unfeigned happiness among her family. The only time she could remember her father smiling or chuckling was at some one else's misfortune, or over some cruel thing he had said himself.

Her sister's joy over some little social triumph — usually at the cost of the humiliation of another.

Her brother's cheeriness over some smart stroke of business in which another firm was involved to their cost.

Parasites all!

The memory of her mother was the only link that bound her to her childhood. The gentle, uncomplaining spirit of her: the unselfish abnegation of her: the soul's tragedy of her — giving up her life at the altar of duty, at the bidding of a hardened despot.

All Angela's childhood came back in a brief illuminating flash. The face of her one dear, dead companion — her mother — glowed before her. How her mother would have cared for and tended, and worshipped a man even as the one lying riddled on that bed of suffering!

All the best in Angela was from her mother. All the resolute fighting quality was from her father.

She would use both now in defence of the wounded man. She would tend him and care for him, and see that no harm came to him.

She was roused from her self-searching thoughts by the doctor's voice and the touch of his hand.

"Good-bye for the present, Miss Kingsnorth. Sure it's in good hands I'm lavin' him. But for you he'd be lyin' in the black jail with old Doctor Costello glarin' down at him with his gimlet eyes. I wouldn't wish a dog that. Faith, I've known Costello to open a wound 'just to see if it was healthy,' sez he, an' the patient screamin' 'Holy murther!' all the while, and old 'Cos' leerin' down at him and sayin': 'Does it hurt? Go on now, *does* it? Well, we'll thry *this* one and see if that does, too,' and in 'ud go the lance again. I tell ye it's the Christian he is!" He stopped abruptly. "How me tongue runs on. 'Talkative McGinnis' is what the disrespectful ones call me — I'll run in after eight and mebbe I'll bleed him a little and give him something'll make him slape like a top till morrin'. Good-bye to yez, for the present," and the kindly, plump little man hurried out with the faint echo of a tune whistling through his lips.

Angela sat down at a little distance from the sick-bed and watched the wounded man. His face was drawn with pain. His eyes were closed. But he was not sleeping. His fingers locked and unlocked. His lips moved. He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"You need not stay here," he said.

"Would you rather I didn't?" asked Angela, rising.

"Why did you bring me here?"

"To make sure your wounds were attended to."

"Your brother is a landlord — 'Kingsnorth — the absentee landlord,' we used to call your father as children. And I'm in his son's house. I'd betther be in jail than here."

"You mustn't think that."

"You've brought me here to humiliate me — to humiliate me!"

"No. To care for you. To protect you."

"Protect me?"

"If I can."

"That's strange."

"I heard you speak to-day."

"You did?"

"I did."

"I'm glad of that."

"So am I."

"Pity your brother wasn't there too."

"It was — a great pity."

"Here's one that Dublin Castle and the English government can't frighten. I'll serve my time in prison when I'm well enough — it's the first time they've caught me and they had to *shoot* me to do it — and when I come out I'll come straight back here and take up the work just where I'm leaving it."

"You mustn't go to prison."

"It's the lot of every Irishman to-day who says what he thinks."

"It mustn't be yours! It mustn't!" Angela's voice rose in her distress. She repeated: "It mustn't! I'll appeal to my brother to stop it."

"If he's anything like his father it's small heed he'll pay to your pleading. The poor wretches here appealed to old Kingsnorth in famine and sickness — not for *help*, mind ye, just for a little time to pay their rents —

and the only answer they ever got from him was 'Pay or go'!"

"I know! I know!" Angela replied. "And many a time when I was a child my mother and I cried over it."

He looked at her curiously. "You and yer mother cried over *us?*"

"We did. Indeed we did."

"They say the heart of England is in its womenkind. But they have nothing to do with her laws."

"They will have some day."

"It'll be a long time comin', I'm thinkin'. If they take so long to free a whole country how long do ye suppose it'll take them to free a whole *sex* — and the female one at that?"

"It will come!" she said resolutely.

He looked at her strangely.

"And you cried over Ireland's sorrows?"

"As a child and as a woman," said Angela.

"And ye've gone about here tryin' to help them too, haven't ye?"

"I could do very little."

"Well, the spirit is there — and the heart is there. If they hadn't liked *you* it's the sorry time maybe your brother would have."

He paused again, looking at her intently, whilst his fingers clutched the coverlet convulsively as if to stifle a cry of pain.

"May I ask ye yer name?" he gasped.

"Angela," she said, almost in a whisper.

"Angela," he repeated. "Angela! It's well named ye are. It's the ministering angel ye've been down here — to the people — and — to me."

"Don't talk any more now. Rest."

"*Rest*, is it? With all the throuble in the wurrld beatin' in me brain and throbbin' in me heart?"

"Try and sleep until the doctor comes to-night."

He lay back and closed his eyes.

Angela sat perfectly still.

In a few minutes he opened them again. There was a new light in his eyes and a smile on his lips.

"Ye heard me speak, did ye?"

"Yes."

"Where were ye?"

"Above you, behind a bank of trees."

A playful smile played around his lips as he said: "It was a *good* speech, wasn't it?"

"I thought it wonderful," Angela answered.

"And what were yer feelings listenin' to a man urgin' the people against yer own country?"

"I felt I wanted to stand beside you and echo everything you said."

"*Did* you?" and his eyes blazed and his voice rose.

"You spoke as some prophet, speaking in a wilderness of sorrow, trying to bring them comfort."

He smiled whimsically, as he said, in a weary voice:

"I tried to bring them comfort and I got them broken heads and buck-shot."

"It's only through suffering every *great* cause triumphs," said Angela.

"Then the Irish should triumph some day. They've suffered enough, God knows."

"They will," said Angela eagerly. "Oh, how I wish I'd been born a man to throw in my lot with the weak! to bring comfort to sorrow, freedom to the oppressed: joy to wretchedness. That is your mission. How I envy you. I glory in what the future has in store for you. Live for it! Live for it!"

"I will!" cried O'Connell. "Some day the yoke will be lifted from us. God grant that mine will be the hand to help do it. God grant I am alive to see it done. That day'll be worth living for — to wring recognition from our enemies — to — to — to —" he sank back weakly on the pillow, his voice fainting to a whisper.

Angela brought him some water and helped him up while he drank it. She smoothed back the shining hair — red, shot through gold — from his forehead. He thanked her with a look. Suddenly he burst into tears. The strain of the day had snapped his self-control at last. The floodgates were opened. He sobbed and sobbed like some tired, hurt child. Angela tried to comfort him. In a moment she was crying, too. He took her hand and kissed it repeatedly, the tears falling on it as he did so.

"God bless ye! God bless ye!" he cried.

In that moment of self-revelation their hearts went out to each other. Neither had known happiness nor love, nor faith in mankind.

In that one enlightening moment of emotion their hearts were laid bare to each other. The great comedy of life between man and woman had begun.

From that moment their lives were linked together.

CHAPTER VIII

ANGELA IN SORE DISTRESS

THREE days afterwards O'Connell was able to dress and move about his room. He was weak from loss of blood and the confinement that an active man resents. But his brain was clear and vivid. They had been three wonderful days.

Angela had made them the most amazing in his life. The memory of those hours spent with her he would carry to his grave.

She read to him and talked to him and lectured him and comforted him. There were times when he thanked the Power that shapes our ends for having given him this one supreme experience. The cadences of her voice would haunt him through the years to come.

And in a little while he must leave it all. He must stand his trial under the "Crimes Act" for speaking at a "Proclaimed" meeting.

Well, whatever his torture he knew he would come out better equipped for the struggle. He had learned something of himself he had so far never dreamed of in his bitter struggle with the handicap of his life. He had something to live for now besides the call of his country — the call of the *heart* — the cry of beauty and truth and reverence.

Angela inspired him with all these. In the three days she ministered to him she had opened up a vista he had hitherto never known. And now he had to leave it and face his accusers, and be hectored and jeered at in the mockery they called "trials." From the Court-House

he would go to the prison and from thence he would be sent back into the world with the brand of the prison-cell upon him. As the thought of all this passed through his mind, he never wavered. He would face it as he had faced trouble all his life, with body knit for the struggle, and his heart strong for the battle.

And back of it all the yearning that at the end she would be waiting and watching for his return to the conflict for the great "Cause" to which he had dedicated his life.

On the morning of the third day Mr. Roche, the resident magistrate, was sent for by Nathaniel Kingsnorth. Mr. Roche found him firm and determined, his back to the fireplace, in which a bright fire was burning, although the month was July.

"Even the climate of Ireland rebels against the usual laws of nature!" thought Kingsnorth, as he shivered and glanced at the steady, drenching downpour that had lasted, practically, ever since he had set foot in the wretched country.

The magistrate came forward and greeted him respectfully.

"Good morning, Mr. Roche," said Nathaniel, motioning him to sit down by the fire.

"I've sent for you to remove this man O'Connell," added Nathaniel, after a pause.

"Certainly — if he is well enough to be moved."

"The doctor, I understand, says that he is."

"Very well. I'll drive him down to the Court-House. The Court is sitting now," said Roche, rising.

Kingsnorth stopped him with a gesture.

"I want you to understand it was against my [illegible] wishes that he was ever brought into this house."

"Miss Kingsnorth told me, when I had arrested him,

that you would shelter him and go bail for him, if necessary," said Roche, in some surprise.

"My sister does things under impulse that she often regrets afterwards. This is one. I hope there is no harm done?"

"None in the world," replied the magistrate. "On the contrary, the people seem to have a much higher opinion of you, Mr. Kingsnorth, since the occurrence," he added.

"Their opinion — good or bad — is a matter of complete indifference to me. I am only anxious that the representatives of the government do not suppose that, because, through mistaken ideas of charity, my sister brought this man to my house, *I* in any way sanction his attitude and his views!"

"I should not fear that, Mr. Kingsnorth. You have always been regarded as a most loyal subject, sir," answered Roche.

"I am glad. What sentence is he likely to get?"

"It depends largely on his previous record."

"Will it be settled to-day?"

"If the jury bring in a verdict. Sometimes they are out all night on these cases."

"A jury! Good God! A jury of *Irishmen* to *try* an Irishman?"

"They're being *trained* gradually, sir."

"It should never be left to them in a country like this. A judge should have the power of condemning such barefaced criminals, without trial."

"*He'll* be condemned," said Roche confidently.

"What jury will convict him if they all sympathise with him? Answer me that?"

"That was one difficulty we had to face at first," Roche answered. "It was hard, indeed, as you say, to

get an Irishman convicted by an Irish jury — especially the agitators. But we've changed that. We've made them see that loyalty to the Throne is better than loyalty to a Fenian."

"How have they done it?"

"A little *persuasion* and some slight *coercion*, sir."

"I am glad of it. It would be a crime against justice for a man who openly breaks the law not to be punished through being tried before a jury of sympathisers."

"Few of them escape, Mr. Kingsnorth. Dublin Castle found the way. One has to meet craft with craft and opposition with firmness. Under the present government we've succeeded wonderfully." Roche smiled pleasantly as he thought of the many convictions he had been instrumental in procuring himself.

Kingsnorth seemed delighted also.

"Good," he said. "The condition of things here is a disgrace — mind you, I'm not criticising the actions of the officials," he hastened to add.

The magistrate bowed.

Kingsnorth went on:

"But the attitude of the people, their views, their conduct, is deplorable — hopeless. I came here to see what I could do for them. I even thought of spending a certain portion of each year here. But from what I've heard it would be a waste of time and money."

"It is discouraging, at first sight, but we'll have a better state of affairs presently. We must first stamp out the agitator. He is the most potent handicap. Next are the priests. They are nearest to the people. The real solution of the Irish difficulty would be to make the whole nation Protestants."

"Could it be done?"

"It would take time — every big movement takes

time." Roche paused, looked shrewdly at Kingsnorth and asked him:

"What do you intend doing with this estate?"

"I am in a quandary. I'm almost determined to put it in the market. Sell it. Be rid of it. It has always been a source of annoyance to our family. However, I'll settle nothing until I return to London. I'll go in a few days — much sooner than I intended. This man being brought into my house has annoyed and upset me."

"I'm sorry," said the magistrate. "Miss Kingsnorth was so insistent and the fellow seemed in a bad way, otherwise I would never have allowed it."

A servant came in response to Kingsnorth's ring and was sent with a message to have the man O'Connell ready to accompany the magistrate as quickly as possible.

Over a glass of sherry and a cigar the two men resumed their discussion.

"I wouldn't decide too hastily about disposing of the land. Although there's always a good deal of discontent there is really very little trouble here. In fact, until agitators like O'Connell came amongst us we had everything pretty peaceful. We'll dispose of him in short order."

"Do. Do. Make an example of him."

"Trust us to do that," said Roche. After a moment he added: "To refer again to selling the estate you would get very little for it. It can't depreciate much more, and there is always the chance it may improve. Some of the people are quite willing to work —"

"*Are* they? They've not shown any willingness to me."

"Oh, no. They wouldn't."

"What? Not to their landlord?"

"You'd be the *last* they'd show it to. They're strange people in many ways until you get to know them. Now there are many natural resources that might be developed if some capital were put into them."

"My new steward discouraged me about doing that. He said it might be ten years before I got a penny out."

"Your *new* steward?"

"Andrew McPherson."

"The lawyer?"

"Yes."

"He's a hard man, sir."

"The estate needs one."

"Burke understands the people."

"He sympathises with them. I don't want a man like that working for me. I want loyalty to my interests. The makeshift policy of Burke during my father's lifetime helped to bring about this pretty state of things. We'll see what firmness will do. New broom. Sweep the place clean. Rid it of slovenly, ungrateful tenants. Clear away the tap-room orators. I have a definite plan in my mind. If I decide *not* to sell I'll perfect my plan in London and begin operations as soon as I'm satisfied it is feasible and can be put upon a proper business basis. There's too much sentiment in Ireland. That's been their ruin. *I* am going to bring a little common sense into play." Kingsnorth walked restlessly around the room as he spoke. He stopped by the windows and beckoned the magistrate.

"There's your man on the drive. See?" and he pointed to where O'Connell, with a soldier each side of him, was slowly moving down the long avenue.

The door of the room opened and Angela came in hurriedly and went straight to where the two men stood.

There was the catch of a sob in her voice as she spoke to the magistrate.

"Are you taking that poor wounded man to prison?"

"The doctor says he is well enough to be moved," replied Roche.

"You've not seen the doctor. I've just questioned him. He told me you had not asked his opinion and that if you move him it will be without his sanction."

Kingsnorth interrupted angrily: "Please don't interfere."

Angela turned on him: "So, it's *you* who are sending him to prison?"

"I am."

Angela appealed to the magistrate.

"Don't do this, I entreat you — don't do it."

"But I have no choice, Miss Kingsnorth."

"The man can scarcely walk," she pleaded.

"He will receive every attention, believe me, Miss Kingsnorth," Roche replied.

Angela faced her brother again.

"If you let that wounded man go from this house to-day you will regret it to the end of your life." Her face was dead-white; her breath was coming thickly; her eyes were fastened in hatred on her brother's face.

"Kindly try and control yourself, Angela," Kingsnorth said sternly. "You should consider my position a little more —"

"*Your* position? And what is *his?* You with *everything* you want in life — that man with *nothing*. He is being hounded to prison for what? Pleading for his country! Is that a crime? He was shot down by soldiers — for what? For showing something we English are always boasting of feeling *ourselves* and resent any other nation feeling it — patriotism!"

"Stop!" commanded Kingsnorth.

"If you take that sick, wretched man out of this house it will be a crime —" began Angela.

Kingsnorth stopped her: he turned to the magistrate: "Kindly take the man away."

Roche moved to the window.

Angela's heart sank. All her pleading was in vain. Her voice faltered and broke:

"Very well. Then take him. Sentence him for doing something his own countrymen will one day build a monument to him for doing. The moment the prison-door closes behind him a thousand voices will cry 'Shame' on you and your government, and a thousand new patriots will be enrolled. And when he comes out from his torture he'll carry on the work of hatred and vengeance against his tyrants. He will fight you to the last ditch. You may torture his *body*, but you cannot break his *heart* or wither his spirit. They're beyond you. They're — they're —," she stopped suddenly, as her voice rose to the breaking-point, and left the room.

The magistrate went down the drive. In a few moments O'Connell was on his way to the Court-House, a closely guarded prisoner.

Angela, from her window, watched the men disappear. She buried her face in her hands and moaned as she had not done since her mother left her just a few years before. The girlhood in her was dead. She was a woman. The one great note had come to her, transforming her whole nature — love.

And the man she loved was being carried away to the misery and degradation of a convict.

Gradually the moans died away. The convulsive heaving of her breast subsided.

A little later, when her sister Monica came in search of her, she found Angela in a dead faint.

By night she was in a fever.

CHAPTER IX

TWO LETTERS

Dublin, Ireland,
Nov. 16th, 18—

Dear Lady of Mercy:

I have served my sentence. I am free. At first the horrible humiliation of my treatment, of my surroundings, of the depths I had to sink to, burned into me. Then the thought of you sustained me. Your gentle voice: your beauty: your pity: your unbounded faith in me strengthened my soul. All the degradation fell from me. They were but ignoble means to a noble end. I was tortured that others might never know sorrow. I was imprisoned that my countrymen might know liberty. And so the load was lighter.

The memory of those three *wonderful* days was so marvellous, so vivid, that it shone like a star through the blackness of those *terrible* days.

You seem to have taken hold of my heart and my soul and my life.

Forgive me for writing this to you, but it seems that you are the only one I've ever known who understands the mainsprings of my nature, of my hopes and my ambitions — indeed, of my very thoughts.

To-day I met the leader of my party. He greeted me warmly. At last I have proved myself a worthy follower. They think it best I should leave Ireland for a while. If I take active part at once I shall be arrested again and sent for a longer sentence.

They have offered me the position of one of the speakers in a campaign in America to raise funds for the "Cause." I must first see the Chief in London. He sent a message.

writing in the highest terms of my work and expressing a wish to meet me. I wonder if it would be possible to see you in London?

If I am sent to America it would speed my going to speak to you again. If you feel that I ask too much, do not answer this and I will understand.

Out of the fulness of my heart, from the depths of my soul, and with the whole fervour of my being, I ask you to accept all the gratitude of a heart filled to overflowing.

God bless and keep you.

Yours in homage and gratitude,
FRANK OWEN O'CONNELL.

London, Nov. 19th, 18—

My dear Mr. O'Connell:

I am glad indeed to have your letter and to know you are free again. I have often thought of your misery during all these months and longed to do something to assuage it. It is only when a friend is in need and all avenues of help are closed to him that a woman realises how helpless she is.

That they have not crushed your spirit does not surprise me. I was as sure of that as I am that the sun is shining to-day. That you do not work actively in Ireland at once is, I am sure, wise. Foolhardiness is not courage.

In a little while the English government may realise how hopeless it is to try and conquer a people who have liberty in their hearts. Then they will abate the rigour of their unjust laws.

When that day comes you must return and take up the mission with renewed strength and hope and stimulated by the added experience of bitter suffering.

I should most certainly like to see you in London. I am staying with a distant connection of the family. We go to the south of France in a few weeks. I have been very ill — another reproach to the weakness of woman. I am almost recovered now but far from strong. I have to lie

still all day. My only companions are my books and my thoughts.

Let me know when you expect to arrive in London. Come straight here.

I have so much to tell you, but the words halt as they come to my pen.

Looking forward to seeing you,

In all sincerity,

ANGELA KINGSNORTH.

CHAPTER X

O'CONNELL VISITS ANGELA IN LONDON

Nathaniel Kingsnorth stayed only long enough in Ireland to permit of Angela's recovery.

He only went into the sick-room once.

When Angela saw him come into the room she turned her back on him and refused to speak to him.

For a moment a flush of pity for his young sister gave him a pang at his heart. She looked so frail and worn, so desperately ill. After all she was his sister, and again, had she not been punished? He was willing to forget the foolhardy things she had done and the bitter things she had said.

Let bygones be bygones. He realised that he had neglected her. He would do so no longer. Far from it. When they returned to London all that would be remedied. He would take care of her in every possible way. He felt a genuine thrill course through him as he thought of his generosity.

To all of this Angela made no answer.

Stung by her silence, he left the room and sent for his other sister. When Monica came he told her that whenever Angela wished to recognise his magnanimity she could send for him. She would not find him unforgiving.

To this Angela sent no reply.

When the fever had passed and she was stronger, arrangements were made for the journey to London.

As Angela walked unsteadily to the carriage, leaning on the arm of the nurse, Nathaniel came forward to assist her. She passed him without a word. Nor did

she speak to him once, nor answer any remark of his, during the long journey on the train.

When they reached London she refused to go to the Kingsnorth house, where her brother lived, but went at once to a distant cousin of her mother's — Mrs. Wrexford — and made her home with her, as she had often done before. She refused to hold any further communication with her brother, despite the ministrations of her sister Monica and Mrs. Wrexford.

Mrs. Wrexford was a gentle little white-capped widow whose only happiness in life seemed to be in worrying over others' misfortunes. She was on the board of various charitable organisations and was a busy helper in the field of mercy. She worshipped Angela, as she had her mother before her. That something serious had occurred between Angela and her brother Mrs. Wrexford realised, but she could find out nothing by questioning Angela. Every time she asked her anything relative to her attitude Angela was silent.

One day she begged Mrs. Wrexford never to speak of her brother again. Mrs. Wrexford respected her wishes and watched her and nursed her through her convalescence with a tender solicitude.

When O'Connell's letter came, Angela showed it to Mrs. Wrexford, together with her reply.

"Do you mind if I see him here?" Angela asked.

"What kind of man is he?"

"The kind that heroes are made of."

"He writes so strangely — may one say unreservedly? Is he a gentleman?"

"In the real meaning of the word — yes."

"Of good family?"

"Not as we estimate goodness. His family were just simple peasants."

"Do you think it wise to see him?"

"I don't consider the wisdom. I only listen to my heart."

"Do you mean that you care for him?"

"I do."

"You — you love him?"

"So much of love as I can give is his."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Mrs. Wrexford, thoroughly alarmed.

"Don't be afraid," said Angela, quietly. "Our ways lie wide apart. He is working for the biggest thing in life. His work *is* his life. I am nothing."

"But don't you think it would be indiscreet, dear, to have such a man come here?"

"Why — indiscreet?"

"A man who has been in prison!" and Mrs. Wrexford shuddered at the thought. She had seen and helped so many poor victims of the cruel laws, and the memory of their drawn faces and evil eyes, and coarse speech, flashed across her mind. She could not reconcile one coming into her little home.

Angela answered her:

"Yes, he has been in prison, but the shame was for his persecutors — not for him. Still, if you would rather I saw him somewhere else —"

"Oh no, my dear child. If you wish it —"

"I do. I just want to see him again, as he writes he does me. I want to hear him speak again. I want to wish him 'God-speed' on his journey."

"Very well, Angela," said the old lady. "As you wish."

A week afterwards O'Connell arrived in London. They met in Mrs. Wrexford's little drawing-room in Mayfair.

They looked at each other for some moments without

speaking. Both noted the fresh lines of suffering in each other's faces. They had been through the long valley of the shadow of sorrow since they had last met.

But O'Connell thought, as he looked at her, that all the suffering he had gone through passed from him as some hideous dream. It was worth it — these months of torture — just to be looking at her now. Worth the long black nights — the labours in the heat of the day, with life's outcasts around him; the taunts of his gaolers: worth all the infamy of it — just to stand there looking at her.

She had taken his life in her two little hands.

He had bathed his soul all these months in the thought of her. He had prayed night and day that he might see her standing near him just as she was then: see the droop of her eye and the silk of her hair and feel the touch of her hand and hear the exquisite tenderness of her voice.

He stood mute before her.

She held out her hand and said simply:

"Thank you for coming."

"It was good of you to let me," he answered hoarsely.

"They have not broken your spirit or your courage?"

"No," he replied tensely; "they are the stronger."

"I thought they would be," she said proudly.

All the while he was looking at the pale face and the thin transparency of her hands.

"But you have suffered, too. You have been ill. Were you in — danger?" His voice had a catch of fear in it as he asked the, to him, terrible question.

"No. It was just a fever. It is past. I am a little weak — a little tired. That will pass, too."

"If anything had happened to you — or ever should happen!" He buried his face in his hands and moaned:

"Oh, my God! Oh, my God!"

His body shook with the sobs he tried vainly to check. Angela put her hand gently on his shoulder.

"Don't do that," she whispered.

He controlled himself with an effort.

"It will be over in a moment. Just a moment. I am sorry."

He suddenly knelt at her feet, his head bowed in reverence. "God help me," he cried faintly, "I love you! I love you!"

She looked down at him, her face transfigured.

He loved her!

The beat of her heart spoke it! "He loves you!" the throbbing of her brain shouted it: "He loves you!" the cry of her soul whispered it: "He loves you!"

She stretched out her hands to him:

"My love is yours, just as yours is mine. Let us join our lives and give them to the suffering and the oppressed."

He looked up at her in wonder.

"I daren't. Think what I am."

"You are the best that is in me. We are mates."

"A peasant! A beggar!"

"You are the noblest of the noble."

"A convict."

"Our Saviour was crucified so that His people should be redeemed. You have given the pain of your body so that your people may be free."

"It wouldn't be fair to you," he pleaded.

"If you leave me it will be unfair to us both."

"Oh, my dear one! My dear one!"

He folded her in his arms:

"I'll give the best of my days to guard you and protect you and bring you happiness."

"I am happy now," and her voice died to a whisper.

CHAPTER XI

KINGSNORTH IN DESPAIR

Three days afterwards Nathaniel Kingsnorth returned late at night from a political banquet.

It had been a great evening. At last it seemed that life was about to give him what he most wished for. His dearest ambitions were, apparently, about to be realised.

He had been called on, as a staunch Conservative, to add his quota to the already wonderful array of brilliant perorations of seasoned statesmen and admirable speakers.

Kingsnorth had excelled himself.

Never had he spoken so powerfully.

Being one of the only men at the banquet who had enjoyed even a brief glimpse of Ireland, he made the solution of the Irish question the main topic of his speech. Speaking lucidly and earnestly, he placed before them his panacea for Irish ills.

His hearers were enthralled.

When he sat down the cheering was prolonged. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, an old friend of his late father, spoke most glowingly to him and of him in his hearing. The junior Whip hinted at his contesting a seat at a coming bye-election in the North of Ireland. A man with his knowledge of Ireland — as he had shown that night — would be invaluable to his party.

When he left the gathering he was in a condition of ecstasy. Lying back, amid the cushions, during his long drive home, he closed his eyes and pictured the future. His imagination ran riot. It took wings and

flew from height to height. He saw himself the leader of a party — "The Kingsnorth Party!"— controlling his followers with a hand of iron, and driving them to vote according to his judgment and his decree.

By the time he reached home he had entered the Cabinet and was being spoken of as the probable Prime Minister. But for the sudden stopping of the horses he might have attained that proud distinction.

The pleasant warmth of the entrance hall on this chill November night, greeted him as a benignant welcome. He hummed a tune cheerfully as he climbed the stairs, and was smiling genially when he entered the massive study.

He poured out a liqueur and stood sipping it as he turned over the letters brought by the night's post. One arrested him. It had been delivered by hand, and was marked "Most Urgent." He lit a cigar and tore open the envelope. As he read the letter every vestige of colour left his face. He sank into a chair: the letter slipped from his fingers. All his dreams had vanished in a moment. His house of cards had toppled down. His ambitions were surely and positively destroyed at one stroke. He mechanically picked up the letter and re-read it. Had it been his death-sentence it could not have affected him more cruelly.

"*Dear Nathaniel:*

I scarcely know how to write to you about what has happened. I am afraid I am in some small measure to blame. Ten days ago your sister showed me a letter from a man named O'Connell — [Kingsnorth crushed the letter in his hand as he read the hated name — the name of the man who had caused him so much discomfort during that unfortunate visit to his estate in Ireland. How he blamed himself

now for having ever gone there. There was indeed a curse on it for the Kingsnorths.

He straightened out the crumpled piece of paper and read on]: — a man named O'Connell — the man she nursed in your house in Ireland after he had been shot by the soldiers. He was coming to England and wished to see her. She asked my permission. I reasoned with her — but she was decided. If I should not permit her to see him in my house she would meet him elsewhere. It seemed better the meeting should be under my roof, so I consented. I bitterly reproach myself now for not acquainting you with the particulars. You might have succeeded in stopping what has happened.

Your sister and O'Connell were married this morning by special licence and left this afternoon for Liverpool, en route to America.

I cannot begin to tell you how much I deplore the unfortunate affair. It will always be a lasting sorrow to me. I cannot write any more now. My head is aching with the thought of what it will mean to you. Try not to think too hardly of me and believe me

Always your affectionate cousin,

Mary Caroline Wrexford.

Kingsnorth's head sank on to his breast. Every bit of life left him. Everything about his feet. Ashes. The laughing-stock of his friends.

Were Angela there at that moment he could have killed her.

The humiliation of it! The degradation of it! Married to that lawless Irish agitator. The man now a member of his family! A cry of misery broke from him, as he realised that the best years of his life were to come and go fruitlessly. His career was ended. Despair lay heavy on his soul.

CHAPTER XII

LOOKING FORWARD

STANDING on the main deck of an Atlantic liner stood Angela and O'Connell.

They were facing the future together.

Their faces were turned to the West.

The sun was sinking in a blaze of colour.

Their eyes lighted up with the joy of *hope*.

Love was in their hearts.

BOOK II

THE END OF THE ROMANCE

CHAPTER I

ANGELA'S CONFESSION

A YEAR after the events in the preceding book took place O'Connell and his young wife were living in a small apartment in one of the poorer sections of New York City.

The first few months in America had been glorious ones for them. Their characters and natures unfolded to each other as some wonderful paintings, each taking its own hues from the adoration of the other.

In company with a noted Irish organiser O'Connell had spoken in many of the big cities of the United States and was everywhere hailed as a hero and a martyr to English tyranny.

But he had one ever-present handicap — a drawback he had never felt during the years of struggle preceding his marriage. His means were indeed small. He tried to eke out a little income writing articles for the newspapers and magazines. But the recompense was pitiful. He could not bear, without a pang, to see Angela in the dingy surroundings that he could barely afford to provide for her.

On her part Angela took nothing with her but a few jewels her mother had left her, some clothes and very little money. The money soon disappeared and then one by one the keepsakes of her mother were parted with. But they never lost heart. Through it all they were happy. All the poetry of O'Connell's nature came uppermost, leavened, as it was, by the deep faith and veneration of his wife.

This strangely assorted fervent man and gentle woman seemed to have solved the great mystery of happiness between two people.

But the poverty chafed O'Connell — not for himself, but for the frail, loving, uncomplaining woman who had given her life into his care.

His active brain was continually trying to devise new ways of adding to his meagre income. He multiplied his duties: he worked far into the night when he could find a demand for his articles. But little by little his sources of revenue failed him.

Some fresh and horrible Agrarian crimes in Ireland, for which the Home Rule party were blamed, for a while turned the tide of sympathy against his party. The order was sent out to discontinue meetings for the purpose of collecting funds in America — funds the Irish-Americans had been so cheerfully and plentifully bestowing on the "Cause."

O'Connell was recalled to Ireland. His work was highly commended.

Some day they would send him to the United States again as a Special Pleader. At present he would be of greater value at home.

He was instructed to apply to the treasurer of the fund and arrangements would be made for his passage back to Ireland.

He brought the news to Angela with a strange feeling of fear and disappointment. He had built so much on making a wonderful career in the great New World and returning home some day to Ireland with the means of relieving some of her misery and with his wife guarded, as she should be, from the possibility of want. And here was he going back to Ireland as poor as he left it — though richer immeasurably in the love of Angela.

She was sitting perfectly still, her eyes on the floor, when he entered the room. He came in so softly that she did not hear him. He lifted her head and looked into her eyes. He noticed with certainty what had been so far only a vague, ill-defined dread. Her face was very, very pale and transparent. Her eyes were sunken and had a strange brilliancy. She was much slighter and far more ethereal than on that day when they stood on the deck of the ship and turned their faces so hopefully to the New World.

He felt a knife-like stab startle through his blood to his heart. His breath caught.

Angela looked up at him radiantly.

He kissed her and with mock cheerfulness he said, laughingly:

"Such news, me darlin'! Such wondherful news!"

"Good news, dear?"

"The best in the wurrld," and he choked a sob.

"I knew it would come! I knew it would. Tell me, dear."

"We're to go back — back to Ireland. See — here are the orders," and he showed her the official letter.

She took it wonderingly and read it. Her hand dropped to her side. Her head drooped into the same position he had found her in. In a moment he was kneeling at her side:

"What is it, dear?"

"We can't go, Frank."

"We can't go? What are ye sayin', dear?"

"We can't go," she repeated, her body crumpled up limply in the chair.

"And why not, Angela? I know I can't take ye back as I brought ye here, dear, if that's what ye mane. The luck's been against me. It's been cruel hard against

me. An' that thought is tearin' at me heart this minnit."

"It isn't *that*, Frank," she said, faintly.

"Then what is it?"

"Oh," she cried, "I hoped it would be so different — so very different."

"What did ye think would be so different, dear? Our going back? Is that what's throublin' ye?"

"No, Frank. Not that. I don't care *how* we go back so long as you are with me." He pressed her hand. In a moment she went on: "But we can't go. We can't go. Oh, my dear, my dear, can't you guess? Can't you think?" She looked imploringly into his eyes.

A new wonder came into his. Could it be true? Could it? He took both her hands and held them tightly and stood up, towering over her, and trembling violently.

"Is it — is it — ?" he cried and stopped as if afraid to complete the question.

She smiled a wan smile up at him and nodded her head as she answered:

"The union of our lives is to be complete. Our love is to be rewarded."

"A child is coming to us?" he whispered.

"It is," and her voice was hushed, too.

"Praise be to God! Praise be to His Holy Name," and O'Connell clasped his hands in prayer.

In a little while she went on: "It was the telling you I wanted to be so different. I wanted you, when you heard it, to be free of care — happy. And I've waited from day to day hoping for the best — that some good fortune would come to you."

He forced one of his old time, hearty laughs, but there was a hollow ring in it:

"What is that yer sayin' at all? Wait for good fortune? Is there any good fortune like what ye've just told me? Sure I'm ten times the happier man since I came into this room." He put his arm around her and sitting beside her drew her closely to him. "Listen, dear," he said, "listen. We'll go back to the old country. Our child shall be born where we first met. There'll be no danger. No one shall harm us with that little life trembling in the balance — the little precious life. If it's a girl-child she'll be the mother of her people; and if it be a man-child he shall grow up to carry on his father's work. So there — there — me darlin', we'll go back — we'll go back."

She shook her head feebly. "I can't," she said.

"Why not, dear?"

"I didn't want to tell you. But now you make me. Frank, dear, I am ill."

His heart almost stopped. "Ill? Oh, my darlin', what is it? Is it serious? Tell me it isn't serious?" and his voice rang with a note of agony.

"Oh, no, I don't think so. I saw the doctor to-day. He said I must be careful — very careful until — until — our baby is born."

"An' ye kept it all to yerself, me brave one, me dear one. All right. We won't go back. We'll stay here. I'll make them find me work. I'm strong. I'm clever too and crafty, Angela. I'll wring it from this hustling city. I'll fight it and beat it. Me darlin' shall have everything she wants. My little mother — my precious little mother."

He cradled her in his strong arms and together they sat for hours and the pall of his poverty fell from them and they pictured the future rose-white and crowned with

gold — a future in which there were *three* — the trinity one and undivided.

Presently she fell asleep in his arms. He raised his eyes to heaven and prayed God to help him in his hour of striving. He prayed that the little life sleeping so calmly in his arms would be spared him.

"Oh God! answer my prayer, I beseech you," he cried. Angela smiled contentedly in her sleep and spoke his name. It seemed to O'Connell as if his prayer had been heard and answered. He gathered the slight form up in his arms and carried her to her room and sat by her until dawn.

It was the first night for many weeks that she had slept through till morning without starting out of her sleep in pain. This night she slumbered like a child and a smile played on her lips as though her dreams were happy ones.

CHAPTER II

A COMMUNICATION FROM NATHANIEL KINGSNORTH

The months that followed were the hardest in O'Connell's life. Strive as he would he could find no really remunerative employment. He had no special training. He knew no trade. His pen, though fluent, was not cultured and lacked the glow of eloquence he had when speaking. He worked in shops and in factories. He tried to report on newspapers. But his lack of experience everywhere handicapped him. What he contrived to earn during those months of struggle was all too little as the time approached for the great event.

Angela was now entirely confined to her bed. She seemed to grow more spirit-like every day. A terrible dread haunted O'Connell waking and sleeping. He would start out of some terrible dream at night and listen to her breathing. When he would hurry back at the close of some long, disappointing day his heart would be hammering dully with fear for his loved one.

As the months wore on his face became lined with care, and the bright gold of his hair dimmed with streaks of silver. But he never faltered or lost courage. He always felt he must win the fight now for existence as he meant to win the greater conflict later — for liberty.

Angela, lying so still, through the long days, could only hope. She felt so helpless. It was woman's weakness that brought men like O'Connell to the edge of despair. And hers was not merely bodily weakness but the more poignant one of *Pride*. Was it fair to her husband? Was it just? In England she had prosperous

relatives. They would not let her die in her misery. They could not let her baby come into the world with poverty as its only inheritance. Till now she had been unable to master her feeling of hatred and bitterness for her brother Nathaniel; her intense dislike and contempt for her sister Monica. From the time she left England she had not written to either of them. Could she now? Something decided her.

One night O'Connell came back disheartened. Try as he would, he could not conceal it. He was getting to the end of his courage. There was insufficient work at the shop he had been working in for several weeks. He had been told he need not come again.

Angela, lying motionless and white, tried to comfort him and give him heart.

She made up her mind that night. The next day she wrote to her brother.

She could not bring herself to express one regret for what she had done or said. On the contrary she made many references to her happiness with the man she loved. She did write of the hardships they were passing through. But they were only temporary. O'Connell was so clever — so brilliant — he must win in the end. Only just now she was ill. She needed help. She asked no gift — a loan — merely. They would pay it back when the days of plenty came. She would not ask even this were it not that she was not only ill, but the one great wonderful thing in the world was to be vouchsafed her — motherhood. In the name of her unborn baby she begged him to send an immediate response.

She asked a neighbour to post the letter so that O'Connell would not know of her sacrifice. She waited anxiously for a reply.

Some considerable time afterwards — on the eve of her

travail and when things with O'Connell were at their worst — the answer came by cable.

She was alone when it came.

Her heart beat furiously as she opened it. Even if he only sent a little it would be so welcome now when they were almost at the end. If he had been generous how wonderful it would be for her to help the man to whom nothing was too much to give her. The fact that her brother had cabled strengthened the belief that he had hastened to come to her rescue.

She opened the cable and read it. Then she fell back on the pillow with a low, faint moan.

When, hours later, O'Connell returned from a vain search for work he found her senseless, with the cable in her fingers. He tried to recover her without success. He sent a neighbour for a doctor. As he watched the worn, patient face, his heart full to bursting, the thought flashed through him — what could have happened to cause this collapse? He became conscious of the cable he had found tightly clasped in her hand. He picked it up and read it. It was very brief:

You have made your bed lie in it.

NATHANIEL KINGSNORTH.

was all it said.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF PEG

Toward morning the doctor placed a little mite of humanity in O'Connell's arms. He looked down at it in a stupor. It had really come to pass. Their child — Angela's and his! A little baby-girl. The tiny wail from this child, born of love and in sorrow, seemed to waken his dull senses. He pressed the mite to him as the hot tears flowed down his cheeks. A woman in one of the adjoining flats who had kindly offered to help took the child away from him. The doctor led him to the bedside. He looked down at his loved one. A glaze was over Angela's eyes as she looked up at him. She tried to smile. All her suffering was forgotten. She knew only pride and love. She was at peace. She raised her hand, thin and transparent now, to O'Connell. He pressed it to his lips.

She whispered:

"My baby. Bring me — my baby."

He took it from the woman and placed it in Angela's weak arms. She kissed it again and again. The child wailed pitifully. The effort had been too much for Angela's failing strength. Consciousness left her.

. . . . . .

Just before sunrise she woke. O'Connell was sitting beside her. He had never moved. The infant was sleeping on some blankets on the couch — the woman watching her.

Angela motioned her husband to bend near to her.

Her eyes shone with unearthly brightness. He put his ear near her lips. Her voice was very, very faint.

"'Take — care — of — our — baby — Frank. I'm — I'm — leaving you. God — help — you — and — keep — you — and bless you — for — your — love — of me." She paused to take breath — then she whispered her leave-taking. The words never left O'Connell's memory for all the days of all the years that followed.

"My — last — words — dear — the — last — I'll — ever — speak — to — you. I — I — love — you — with — all — my heart — and — my soul — *husband!* Good — good-bye — Frank." She slipped from his arms and lay, lips parted, eyes open, body still.

The struggle was over. She had gone where there are no petty treacheries, no mean brutalities — where all stand alike before the Throne to render an account of their stewardship.

The brave, gentle little heart was stilled forever.

BOOK III

PEG

CHAPTER I

PEG'S CHILDHOOD

And now Peg appears for the first time, and brings her radiant presence, her roguish smile, her big, frank, soulful, blue eyes, her dazzling red hair, her direct, honest and outspoken truth: her love of all that is clean and pure and beautiful — Peg enters our pages and turns what was a history of romance and drama into a Comedy of Youth.

Peg — pure as a mountain lily, sweet as a fragrant rose, haunting as an old melody — Peg o' our Hearts comes into our story, even as she entered her father's life, as the Saviour of these pages, even as she was the means of saving O'Connell.

And she did save her father.

It was the presence and the thought of the little motherless baby that kept O'Connell's hand from destroying himself when his reason almost left him after his wife's death. The memories of the days immediately following the passing of Angela are too painful to dwell upon.

They are past. They are sacred in O'Connell's heart. They will be to the historian.

Thanks to some kindly Irishmen who heard of O'Connell's plight he borrowed enough money to bury his dead wife and place a tablet to her memory.

He sent a message to Kingsnorth telling him of his sister's death. He neither expected nor did he receive an answer.

As soon as it was possible he returned to Ireland and threw himself once again heart and soul into working

for the "Cause." He realised his only hope of keeping his balance was to work. He went back to the little village he was born in and it was Father Cahill's hands that poured the baptismal waters on O'Connell's and Angela's baby and it was Father Cahill's voice that read the baptismal service.

She was christened Margaret.

Angela, one night, when it was nearing her time, begged him if it were a girl to christen her Margaret after her mother, since all the best in Angela came *from* her mother.

O'Connell would have liked to have named the mite "Angela." But his dead wife's wishes were paramount So Margaret the baby was christened. It was too distinguished a name and too long for such a little bundle of pink and white humanity. It did not seem to fit her. So, "Peg" she was named and "Peg" she remained for the rest of her life.

When she was old enough to go with him O'Connell took Peg everywhere. He seemed to bear a charmed life when she was with him.

Peg's earliest memories are of the village where she was baptised and where her father was born. Her little will was law to everyone who came in contact with her. She ruled her little court with a hand of iron.

Many were the dire predictions of the rod O'Connell was making for his own back in giving the little mite her own way in everything.

But O'Connell's only happiness was in Peg and he neither heard nor cared about any criticism that may have been levelled at him for his fond, and, perhaps, foolish care of her.

Looming large in Peg's memories in after life are her father showing her St. Kernan's Hill, and pointing out

With Peg—study meant roaming through her books until she found something that interested her

the mount on which he stood and spoke that day, whilst her mother, hidden by that dense mass of trees, saw every movement and heard every word. From there he took her to "The Gap" and pointed out the windows of the room in which he was nursed for those three blessed days.

It eased his mind to talk to the child of Angela and always he pictured her as the poet writes in verse of the passion of his life: as the painter puts on canvas the features that make life worth the living for him.

Those memories were very clear in little Peg's mind.

Then somehow her childish thoughts all seemed to run to Home Rule — to love of Ireland and hatred of England — to thinking all that was good of Irishmen and all that was bad of Englishmen.

"Why do yez hate the English so much, father?" she asked O'Connell once, looking up at him with a puzzled look in her big blue eyes, and the most adorable brogue coming fresh from her tongue.

"Why do yez hate them?" she repeated.

"I've good cause to, Peg me darlin'," he answered, and a deep frown gathered on his brow.

"Sure wasn't me mother English?" Peg asked.

"She was."

"Then *why* do yez hate the English?"

"It 'ud take a long time to tell ye that, Peggy. Some day I will. There's many a reason why the Irish hate the English, and many a good reason too. But there's one why you and I should hate them, and hate them with all the bittherness that's in us."

"And what is it?" said Peg curiously.

"I'll tell ye. When yer mother and I were almost starvin', and she lyin' on a bed of sickness, she wrote to an Englishman and asked him to assist her. An' this is the reply she got: 'Ye've made yer bed; lie in it." That

was the answer she got the day before you were born, and she died givin' ye life. And by the same token the man that wrote that shameful message to a dyin' woman was her own brother."

"Her own brother, yer tellin' me?" asked Peg wrathfully.

"I am, Peg. Her own brother, I'm tellin' ye."

"It's bad luck that man'll have all his life!" said Peg fiercely. "To write me mother that — and she dyin'! Faith I'd like to see him some day — just meet him — and tell him —" she stopped, her little fingers clenched into a miniature fist. The hot colour was in her cheeks and she stamped her small foot in actual rage. "I'd like to meet him some day," she muttered.

"I hope ye never will, Peg," said her father solemnly. "And," he added, "don't let us ever talk of it again, me darlin'!"

And she never did. But she often thought of the incident and the memory of that brutal message was stamped vividly on her little brain.

The greatest excitements of her young life were going with her father to hear him speak. She made the most extraordinary collection of scraps of the speeches she had heard her father make for Home Rule. While he would be speaking she would listen intently, her lips apart, her little body tense with excitement, her little heart beating like a trip-hammer.

When they applauded him she would laugh gleefully and clap her little hands together: if they interrupted him she would turn savagely upon them. She became known all over the countryside as "O'Connell's Peg."

"Sure O'Connell's not the same man at all, at all, since he came back with that little bit of a red-headed child," said a man to Father Cahill one day.

"God is good, Flaherty," replied the priest. "He sent O'Connell a baby to take him up nearer to Himself. Ye're right. He's *not* the same man. It's the good Catholic he is again as he was as a boy. An' it's I'm thankful for that same."

Father Cahill smiled happily. He was much older, but though the figure was a little bent and the hair thinner, and the remainder of it snow-white, the same sturdy spirit was in the old man.

"They're like boy and girl together, that's what they are," said Flaherty with a tone of regret in his voice. "He seems as much of a child as she is when he's with her," he added.

"Every good man has somethin' of the child left in him, me son. O'Connell was goin' in the way of darkness until a woman's hand guided him and gave him that little baby to hold on to his heart strings."

"Sure Peg's the light o' his life, that's what she is," grumbled Flaherty. "It's small chance we ever have of broken heads an' soldiers firin' on us, an' all, through O'Connell, since that child's laid hands on him." Flaherty sighed. "Them was grand days and all," he said.

"They were wicked days, Flaherty," said the priest severely; "and it's surprised I am that a God-fearin' man like yerself should wish them back."

"There are times when I do, Father, the Lord forgive me. A fight lets the bad blood out of ye. Sure it was a pike or a gun O'Connell 'ud shouldher in the ould days, and no one to say him nay, and we all following him like the Colonel of a regiment — an' proud to do it, too. But now it's only the soft words we get from him."

"A child's hand shall guide," said the priest. Then he added:

"It has guided him. Whenever ye get them wicked

thoughts about shouldherin' a gun and flashin' a pike, come round to confession, Flaherty, and it's the good penance I'll give ye to dhrive the devil's temptation away from ye."

"I will that, Father Cahill," said Flaherty, hurriedly, and the men went their different ways.

O'Connell did everything for Peg since she was an infant. His were the only hands to tend the little body, to wash her and dress her, and tie up her little shoe-laces, and sit beside her in her childish sicknesses. He taught her to read and to write and to pray. As she grew bigger he taught her the little he knew of music and the great deal he knew of poetry. He instilled a love of verse into her little mind. He never tired of reading her Tom Moore and teaching her his melodies. He would make her learn them and she would stand up solemnly and recite or sing them, her quaint little brogue giving them an added music. O'Connell and Peg were inseparable.

One wonderful year came to Peg when she was about fourteen.

O'Connell had become recognised as a masterly exponent of the particular form of Land Act that would most benefit Ireland.

It was proposed that he should lecture right through the country, wherever they would let him, and awaken amongst the more violent Irish, the recognition that legislative means were surer of securing the end in view, than the more violent ones of fifteen years before.

The brutality of the Coercion Act had been moderated and already the agricultural and dairy produce of the country had developed so remarkably that the terrible misery of by-gone days, when the potato-crop would fail, had been practically eliminated, or at least in many districts mitigated.

O'Connell accepted the proposition.

Through the country he went speaking in every village he passed through, and sometimes giving several lectures in the big cities. His mode of travelling was in a cart. He would speak from the back of it, Peg sitting at his feet, now watching him, again looking eagerly and intently at the strange faces before her.

They were marvellous days, travelling, sometimes, under a golden sun through the glistening fields: or pushing on at night under a great green-and-white moon.

Peg would sit beside her father as he drove and he would tell her little folk-stories, or sing wild snatches or songs of the days of the Rebellion; or quote lines ringing with the great Irish confidence in the triumph of Justice:

"Lo the path we tread
By our martyred dead
Has been trodden 'mid bane and blessing,
But unconquered still
Is the steadfast will
And the faith they died confessing."

Or at night he would croon from Moore:

"When the drowsy world is dreaming, love,
Then awake — the heavens look bright, my dear,
'Tis never too late for delight, my dear,
And the best of all ways
To lengthen our days
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear!"

When storms would come she would cower down in the bottom of the cart and cry and pray. Storms terrified her. It seemed as if all the anger of the heavens were levelled at her. She would cry and moan pitifully whilst

O'Connell would try to soothe her and tell her that neither God nor man would harm her — no one would touch his "Peg o' my Heart."

After one of those scenes he would sit and brood. Angela had always been afraid of storms, and in the child's terror his beloved wife would rise up before him and the big tears would drop silently down his cheeks.

Peg crept out once when the storm had cleared and the sky was bright with stars. Her father did not hear her. His thoughts were bridging over the years and once more Angela was beside him.

Peg touched him timidly and peered up into his face. She thought his cheeks were wet. But that could not be. She had never seen her father cry.

"What are ye thinkin' about, father?" she whispered. His voice broke. He did not want her to see his emotion. He answered with a half-laugh, half-sob:

"Thinkin' about, is it? It's ashamed I am of ye to be frightened by a few little flashes of lightnin' and the beautiful, grand thundher that always kapes it company. It's ashamed I am of ye — that's what I am!" He spoke almost roughly to hide his emotion and he furtively wiped the tears from his face so that she should not see them.

"It's not the lightnin' I'm afraid of, father," said Peg solemnly. "It's the thundher. It shrivels me up, that's what it does."

"The thundher, is it? Sure that's only the bluff the storm puts up when the rale harm is done by the lightnin's flash. There is no harm in the thundher at all. And remember, after all, it's the will of God."

Peg thought a moment:

"It always sounds just as if He were lookin' down at us and firin' off cannons at us because He's angry with us."

O'Connell said nothing. Presently he felt her small hand creep into his:

"Father," said Peg; "are yez ralely ashamed of me when I'm frightened like that?"

O'Connell was afraid to unbend lest he broke down altogether. So he continued in a voice of mock severity:

"I am that — when ye cry and moan about what God has been good enough to send us."

"Is it a coward I am for bein' afraid, father?" said Peg, her lips quivering.

"That's what ye are, Peg," replied O'Connell with Spartan severity.

"Then I'll never be one again, father! Never again," and her eyes filled up.

He suddenly took her in his arms and pressed her to him and rocked her as though she were still a baby, and his voice trembled and was full of pity as he said:

"Ye can't help it, acushla. Ye can't help it. Ye're *not* a coward, my own brave little Peg. It's yer mother in ye. She could never bear a thundher-storm without fear, and she was the bravest woman that ever lived. Bad luck to me for sayin' a cross word to ye."

Suddenly poor little Peg burst out crying and buried her face on her father's breast and sobbed and sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Ssh! Ssh! There — there, me darlin'," cried O'Connell, now thoroughly alarmed at the depth of feeling the child had loosened from her pent-up emotion, "ye mustn't cry — ye mustn't. See it's laughin' I am! Laughin', that's what I'm doin'."

And he laughed loudly while his heart ached, and he told her stories until she forgot her tears and laughed too.

And that night as he watched her fall off to sleep he knelt down in the straw and prayed:

"Oh, kape her always like she is now — always just a sweet, innocent, pure little creature. Kape the mother in her always, dear Lord, so that she may grow in Your likeness and join my poor, dear Angela in the end. Amen."

Those were indeed glorious days for Peg. She never forgot them in after life.

Waking in the freshness of the early morning, making their frugal breakfast, feeding the faithful old horse and then starting off through the emerald green for another new and wonderful day, to spread the light of the "Cause."

O'Connell had changed very much since the days of St. Kernan's Hill. As was foreshadowed earlier, he no longer urged violence. He had come under the influence of the more temperate men of the party, and was content to win by legislative means, what Ireland had failed to accomplish wholly by conflict. Although no one recognised more thoroughly than O'Connell what a large part the determined attitude of the Irish party, in resisting the English laws, depriving them of the right of free speech, and of meeting to spread light amongst the ignorant, had played in wringing some measure of recognition and of tolerance from the bitter narrowness of the English ministers.

What changed O'Connell more particularly was the action of a band of so-called "Patriots" who operated in many parts of Ireland — maiming cattle, ruining crops, injuring peaceable farmers, who did not do their bidding and shooting at landlords and prominent people connected with the government.

Crime is not a means to honourable victory and O'Connell was ashamed of the miscreants who blackened the fair name of his country by their ruthless and despicable methods.

He avoided the possibility of imprisonment again for the sake of Peg. What would befall her if he were taken from her?

The continual thought that preyed upon him was that he would have nothing to leave her when his call came. Do what he would he could make but little money — and when he had a small surplus he would spend it on Peg — a shawl to keep her warm, or a ribbon to give a gleam of colour to the drab little clothes.

On great occasions he would buy her a new dress, and then Peg was the proudest little child in the whole of Ireland.

Every year, on the anniversary of her mother's death, O'Connell had a Mass said for the repose of Angela's soul, and he would kneel beside Peg through the service, and be silent for the rest of the day. One year he had candles, blessed by the Archbishop, lit on our Lady's altar and he stayed long after the service was over. He sent Peg home. But, although Peg obeyed him, partially, by leaving the church, she kept watch outside until her father came out. He was wiping his eyes as he saw her. He pretended to be very angry.

"Didn't I tell ye to go home?"

"Ye did, father."

"Then why didn't ye obey me?"

"Sure an' what would I be doin' at home, all alone, without you? Don't be cross with me, father."

He took her hand and they walked home in silence. He had been crying and Peg could not understand it. She had never seen him do such a thing before and it

worried her. It did not seem right that a *man* should cry. It seemed a weakness — and that her father, of all men, should do it — he who was not afraid of anything nor anyone — it was wholly unaccountable to her.

When they reached home Peg busied herself about her father, trying to make him comfortable, furtively watching him all the while. When she had put him in an easy chair, and brought him his slippers, and built up the fire, she sat down on a little stool by his side. After a long silence she stroked the back of his hand and then gave him a little tug. He looked down at her.

"What is it, Peg?"

"Was my mother very beautiful, father?"

"The most beautiful woman that ever lived in all the wurrld, Peg."

"She looks beautiful in the picture ye have of her."

From the inside pocket of his coat he drew out a little beautifully-painted miniature. The frame had long since been worn and frayed. O'Connell looked at the face and his eyes shone:

"The man that painted it couldn't put the soul of her into it. That he couldn't. Not the soul of her."

"Am I like her, at all, father?" asked Peg wistfully.

"Sometimes ye are, dear: very like."

After a little pause Peg said:

"Ye loved her very much, father, didn't ye?"

He nodded. "I loved her with all the heart of me and all the strength of me."

Peg sat quiet for some minutes: then she asked him a question very quietly and hung in suspense on his answer:

"Do ye love me as much as ye loved her, father?"

"It's different, Peg — quite, quite different."

"Why is it?" She waited.

He did not answer.

"Sure, love is love whether ye feel it for a woman or a child," she persisted.

O'Connell remained silent.

"Did ye love her *betther* than ye love *me*, father?" Her soul was in her great blue eyes as she waited excitedly for the answer to that, to her, momentous question.

"Why do ye ask me that?" said O'Connell.

"Because I always feel a little sharp pain right through my heart whenever ye talk about me mother. Ye see, father, I've thought all these years that *I* was the one ye really loved —"

"Ye're the only one I have in the wurrld, Peg."

"And ye don't love her memory betther than ye do me?"

O'Connell put both of his arms around her.

"Yer mother is with the Saints, Peg, and here are you by me side. Sure there's room in me heart for the memory of her and the love of you."

She breathed a little sigh of satisfaction and nestled onto her father's shoulder. The little fit of childish jealousy of her dead mother's place in her father's heart passed.

She wanted no one to share her father's affection with her. She gave him all of hers. She needed all of his.

When Peg was eighteen years old and they were living in Dublin, O'Connell was offered quite a good position in New York. It appealed to him. The additional money would make things easier for Peg. She was almost a woman now, and he wanted her to get the finishing touches of education that would prepare her for a position in the world if she met the man she felt she could marry.

Whenever he would speak of marriage Peg would laugh scornfully:

"Who would I be *afther* marryin' I'd like to know? Where in the wurrld would I find a man like you?"

And no coaxing would make her carry on the discussion or consider its possibility.

It still harassed him to think he had so little to leave her if anything happened to him. The offer to go to America seemed providential. Her mother was buried there. He would take Peg to her grave.

Peg grew very thoughtful at the idea of leaving Ireland. All her little likes and dislikes — her impulsive affections and hot hatreds were all bound up in that country. She dreaded the prospect of meeting a number of new people.

Still it was for her father's good, so she turned a brave face to it and said:

"Sure it is the finest thing in the wurrld for both of us."

But the night before they left Ireland she sat by the little window in her bed-room until daylight looking back through all the years of her short life.

It seemed as if she were cutting off all that beautiful golden period. She would never again know the free, careless, happy-go-lucky, living-from-day-to-day existence, that she had loved so much.

It was a pale, wistful, tired little Peg that joined her father at breakfast next morning.

His heart was heavy, too. But he laughed and joked and sang and said how glad they ought to be — going to that wonderful new country, and by the way the country Peg was born in, too! And then he laughed again and said how *fine she* looked and how *well he* felt and that it seemed as if it were God's hand in it all.

And Peg pretended to cheer up, and they acted their parts right to the end — until the last line of land disappeared and they were headed for America. Then they separated and went to their little cabins to think of all that *had been*. And every day they kept up the little deception with each other until they reached America.

They were cheerless days at first for O'Connell. Everything reminded him of his first landing twenty years before with his young wife — both so full of hope, with the future stretching out like some wonderful panorama before them. He returns twenty years older to begin the fight again — this time for his daughter.

His wife was buried at a little Catholic cemetery a few miles outside New York City. There he took Peg one day and they put flowers on the little mound of earth and knelt awhile in prayer. Beneath that earth lay not only his wife's remains, but O'Connell's early hopes and ambitions were buried with her.

Neither spoke either going to or returning from the cemetery. O'Connell's heart was too full. Peg knew what was passing through his mind and sat with her hands folded in her lap — silent. But her little brain was busy thinking back.

Peg had much to think of during the early days following her arrival in New York. At first the city awed her with its huge buildings and ceaseless whirl of activity and noise. She longed to be back in her own little green, beautiful country.

O'Connell was away during those first days until late at night.

He found a school for Peg. She did not want to go to it, but just to please her father she agreed. She lasted in it just one week. They laughed at her brogue and teased and tormented her for her absolute lack of knowl-

edge. Peg put up with that just as long as she could. Then one day she opened out on them and astonished them. They could not have been more amazed had a bomb exploded in their midst. The little, timid-looking, open-eyed, Titian-haired girl was a veritable virago. She attacked and belittled, and mimicked and berated them. They had talked of her *brogue!* They should listen to their own nasal utterances, that sounded as if they were speaking with their noses and not with their tongues! Even the teacher did not go unscathed. She came in for an onslaught, too. That closed Peg's career as a New York student.

Her father arranged his work so that he could be with her at certain periods of the day, and outlined her studies from his own slender stock of knowledge. He even hired a little piano for her and followed up what he had begun years before in Ireland — imbuing her with a thorough acquaintance with Moore and his delightful melodies.

One wonderful day they had an addition to their small family. A little, wiry-haired, scrubby, melancholy Irish terrier followed O'Connell for miles. He tried to drive him away. The dog would turn and run for a few seconds and the moment O'Connell would take his eyes off him he would run along and catch him up and wag his over-long tail and look up at O'Connell with his sad eyes. The dog followed him all the way home and when O'Connell opened the door he ran in. O'Connell had not the heart to turn him out, so he poured out some milk and broke up some dry biscuits for him and then played with him until Peg came home. She liked the little dog at once and then and there O'Connell adopted him and gave him to Peg. He said the dog's face had a look of Michael

Quinlan, the Fenian. So "*Michael*" he was named and he took his place in the little home. He became Peg's boon companion. They romped together like children, and they talked to each other and understood each other. "*Michael*" had an eloquent tail, an expressive bark and a pair of eyes that told more than speech.

The days flowed quietly on, O'Connell apparently satisfied with his lot. But to Peg's sharp eye all was not well with him. There was a settled melancholy about him whenever she surprised him thinking alone. She thought he was fretting for Ireland and their happy days together and so said nothing.

He was really worrying over Peg's future. He had such a small amount of money put by, and working on a salary it would be long before he could save enough to leave Peg sufficient to carry her on for a while if "anything happened." There was always that "if anything happened!" running in his mind.

One day the chance of solving the whole difficulty of Peg's future was placed in his hands. But the means were so distasteful to him that he hesitated about even telling her.

He came in unexpectedly in the early afternoon of that day and found a letter waiting for him with an English postmark. Peg had eyed it curiously off and on for hours. She had turned it over and over in her fingers and looked at the curious, angular writing, and felt a little cold shiver run up and down her as she found herself wondering who could be writing to her father from England.

When O'Connell walked in and picked the letter up she watched him excitedly. She felt, for some strange reason, that they were going to reach a crisis in their

lives when the seal was broken and the contents disclosed. Superstition was strong in Peg, and all that day she had been nervous without reason, and excited without cause.

O'Connell read the letter through twice — slowly the first time, quickly the second. A look of bewilderment came across his face as he sat down and stared at the letter in his hand.

"Who is it from, at all?" asked Peg very quietly, though she was trembling all through her body.

Her father said nothing.

Presently he read it through again.

"It's from England, father, isn't it?" queried Peg, pale as a ghost.

"Yes, Peg," answered her father and his voice sounded hollow and spiritless.

"I didn't know ye had friends in England?" said Peg, eyeing the letter.

"I haven't," replied her father.

"Then who is it from?" insisted Peg, now all impatience and with a strange fear tugging at her heart.

O'Connell looked up at her as she stood there staring down at him, her big eyes wide open and her lips parted. He took both of her hands in one of his and held them all crushed together for what seemed to Peg to be a long, long while. She hardly breathed. She knew something was going to happen to them both.

At last O'Connell spoke and his voice trembled and broke:

"Peg, do ye remember one mornin', years and years ago, when I was goin' to speak in County Mayo, an' we started in the cart at dawn, an' we thravelled for miles and miles an' we came to a great big crossing where the roads divided an' there was no sign post an' we asked each other

which one we should take an' we couldn't make up our minds an' I left it to you an' ye picked a road an' it brought us out safe and thrue at the spot we were making for? Do you remember it, Peg?"

"Faith I do, father. I remember it well. Ye called me yer little guide and said ye'd follow my road the rest of yer life. An' it's many's the laugh we had when I'd take ye wrong sometimes afterwards." She paused. "What makes ye think of that just now, father?"

He did not answer.

"Is it on account o' that letther?" she persisted.

"It is, Peg." He spoke with difficulty as if the words hurt him to speak. "We've got to a great big crossin'-place again where the roads branch off an' I don't know which one to take."

"Are ye goin' to lave it to me again, father?" said Peg.

"That's what I can't make up me mind about, dear — for it may be that ye'll go down one road and me down the other."

"No, father," Peg cried passionately, "that we won't. Whatever the road we'll thravel it together."

"I'll think it out by meself, Peg. Leave me for a while — alone. I want to think it out by meself — alone."

"If it's separation ye're thinkin' of, make up yer mind to one thing — that *I'll* never lave *you*. Never."

"Take '*Michael*' out for a spell and come back in half an hour and in the meanwhile I'll bate it all out in me mind."

She bent down and straightened the furrows in his forehead with the tips of her fingers, and kissed him and then whistled to the wistful "*Michael*" and together they went running down the street toward the little patch of

green where the children played, and amongst whom "*Michael*" was a prime favourite.

Sitting, his head in his hands, his eyes staring into the past, O'Connell was facing the second great tragedy of his life.

CHAPTER II

WE MEET AN OLD FRIEND AFTER MANY YEARS

While O'Connell sat there in that little room in New York trying to decide Peg's fate, a man, who had played some considerable part in O'Connell's life, lay, in a splendidly furnished room in a mansion in the West End of London — dying.

Nathaniel Kingsnorth's twenty years of loneliness and desolation were coming to an end. What an empty, arid stretch of time those years seemed to him as he feebly looked back on them!

After the tragedy of his sister's reckless marriage he deserted public-life entirely and shut himself away in his country-house — except for a few weeks in London occasionally when his presence was required on one or other of the Boards of which he was a director.

The Irish estate — which brought about all his misfortunes — he disposed of at a ridiculously low figure. He said he would accept any bid, however small, so that he could sever all connection with the hated village.

From the day of Angela's elopement he neither saw nor wrote to any member of his family.

His other sister, Mrs. Chichester, wrote to him from time to time — telling him one time of the birth of a boy: two years later of the advent of a girl.

Kingsnorth did not answer any of her letters.

In no way dismayed, Mrs. Chichester continued to write periodically. She wrote him when her son Alaric went to school and also when he went to college. Alaric seemed to absorb most of her interest. He was evidently

her favourite child. She wrote more seldom of her daughter Ethel, and when she did happen to refer to her she dwelt principally on her beauty and her accomplishments. Five years before, an envelope in deep mourning came to Kingsnorth, and on opening it he found a letter from his sister acquainting him with the melancholy news that Mr. Chichester had ended a life of usefulness at the English bar and had died, leaving the family quite comfortably off.

Kingsnorth telegraphed his condolences and left instructions for a suitable wreath to be sent to the funeral. But he did not attend it. Nor did he at any time express the slightest wish to see his sister nor did he encourage any suggestion on her part to visit him.

When he was stricken with an illness, from which no hope of recovery was held out to him, he at once began to put his affairs in order, and his lawyer spent days with him drawing up statements of his last wishes for the disposition of his fortune.

With death stretching out its hand to snatch him from a life he had enjoyed so little, his thoughts, coloured with the fancies of a tired, sick brain, kept turning constantly to his dead sister Angela.

From time to time down through the years he had a softened, gentle remembrance of her. When the news of her death came, furious and unrelenting as he had been toward her, her passing softened it. Had he known in time he would have insisted on her burial in the Kingsnorth vault. But she had already been interred in New York before the news of her death reached him.

The one bitter hatred of his life had been against the man who had taken his sister in marriage and in so doing had killed all possibility of Kingsnorth succeeding in his political and social aspirations.

He heard vaguely of a daughter.

He took no interest in the news.

Now, however, the remembrance of his treatment of Angela burnt into him. He especially repented of that merciless cable: "You have made your bed; lie in it." It haunted him through the long hours of his slow and painful illness. Had he helped her she might have been alive to-day, and those bitter reflections that ate into him night and day might have been replaced by gentler ones and so make his end the more peaceful.

He thought of Angela's child and wondered if she were like his poor dead sister. The wish to see the child became an obsession with him.

One morning, after a restless, feverish night, he sent for his lawyer and told him to at once institute inquiries — find out if the child was still living, and if so — where.

This his lawyer did. He located O'Connell in New York, through a friend of his in the Irish party, and found that the child was living with him in rather poor circumstances. He communicated the result of his inquiries to Kingsnorth. That day a letter was sent to O'Connell asking him to allow his child to visit her dying uncle. O'Connell was to cable at Kingsnorth's expense and if he would consent the money for the expenses of the journey would be cabled immediately. The girl was to start at once, as Mr. Kingsnorth had very little longer to live.

When the letter had gone Kingsnorth drew a breath of relief. He longed to see the child. He would have to wait impatiently for the reply. Perhaps the man whom he had hated all his life would refuse his request. If he did, well, he would make some provision in his will for her — in memory of his dead sister.

The next day he altered his entire will and made Mar-

garet O'Connell a special legacy. Ten days later a cable came:

I consent to my daughter's visiting you.
FRANK OWEN O'CONNELL.

The lawyer cabled at once making all arrangements through their bankers in New York for Miss O'Connell's journey.

That night Kingsnorth slept without being disturbed. He awoke refreshed in the morning. It was the first kindly action he had done for many years.

How much had he robbed himself of all his life, if by doing so little he was repaid so much!

CHAPTER III

PEG LEAVES HER FATHER FOR THE FIRST TIME

O'Connell had a hard struggle with Peg before she would consent to leave him. She met all his arguments with counter-arguments. Nothing would move her for hours.

"Why should I go to a man I have never seen and hate the name of?"

"He's your uncle, Peg."

"It's a fine uncle he's been to me all me life. And it was a grand way he threated me mother when she was starvin'."

"He wants to do somethin' for ye now, Peg."

"I'll not go to him."

"Now listen, dear; it's little I'll have to lave ye when I'm gone," pleaded O'Connell.

"I'll not listen to any talk at all about yer goin'. Yer a great strong healthy man — that's what ye are. What are ye talkin' about? What's got into yer head about goin'?"

"The time must come, some day, Peg."

"All right, we'll know how to face it when it does. But we're not goin' out all the way to meet it," said Peg, resolutely.

"It's very few advantages I've been able to give ye, me darlin'," and O'Connell took up the argument again.

"Advantages or no advantages, what can anybody be more than be happy? Answer me that? An' sure it's happy I've been with you. Now, why should ye want to dhrive it all away from me?"

To these unanswerable reasons O'Connell would remain silent for a while, only to take up the cudgels again. He realised what it would mean to Peg to go to London to have the value of education and of gentle surroundings. He knew her heart was loyal to him: nothing strangers might teach her would ever alter that. And he felt he owed it to her to give her this chance of seeing the great world. *He* would never be able to do it for her. Much as he hated the name of Kingsnorth he acknowledged the fact that he had made an offer O'Connell had no real right to refuse.

He finally persuaded Peg that it was the wise thing: the right thing: and the thing he wished for the most.

"I don't care whether it's wise or right," said poor Peg, beaten at last, "but if you wish it—" and she broke off.

"I do wish it, Peg."

"Ye'll turn me away from ye, eh?"

"No, Peg. Ye'll come back to me a fine lady."

"I'd like to see anybody thry *that* with me. A lady, indeed! Ye love me as I am. I don't want to be any different.

"But ye'll go?"

"If ye say so."

"Then it's all settled?"

"I suppose it is."

"Good, me darlin'. Ye'll never regret it." O'Connell said this with a cheery laugh, though his heart was aching at the thought of being separated from her.

Peg looked at him reproachfully. Then she said:

"It's surprised I am at ye turnin' me away from ye to go into a stuck-up old man's house that threated me mother the way he did."

And so the discussion ended.

For the next few days Peg was busy preparing herself for the journey and buying little things for her scanty equipment. Then the cable came to the effect that a passage was reserved for her and money was waiting at a banker's for her expenses. This Peg obstinately refused to touch. She didn't want anything except what her father gave her.

When the morning of her departure came, poor Peg woke with a heavy heart. It was their first parting, and she was miserable.

O'Connell, on the contrary, seemed full of life and high spirits. He laughed at her and joked with her and made a little bundle of some things that would not go in her bag — and that he had kept for her to the last minute. They were a rosary that had been his mother's, a prayer-book Father Cahill gave him the day he was confirmed, and lastly the little miniature of Angela. It wrung his heart to part with it, but he wanted Peg to have it near her, especially as she was going amongst the relations of the dead woman. All through this O'Connell showed not a trace of emotion before Peg. He kept telling her there was nothing to be sad about. It was all going to be for her good.

When the time came to go, the strange pair made their way down to the ship — the tall, erect, splendid-looking man and the little red-haired girl in her simple black suit and her little black hat, with red flowers to brighten it.

O'Connell went aboard with her, and an odd couple they looked on the saloon-deck, with Peg holding on to "*Michael*" — much to the amusement of the passengers, the visitors and the stewards.

Poor, staunch, loyal, honest, true little Peg, going alone to — what? Leaving the one human being she

cared for and worshipped — her playmate, counsellor, friend and father — all in one!

O'Connell never dropped his high spirits all the time they were together on board the ship. He went aboard with a laugh and when the bell rang for all visitors to go ashore he said good-bye to Peg with a laugh — while poor Peg's heart felt like a stone in her breast. She stood sobbing up against the rail of the saloon deck as the ship swung clear. She was looking for her father through the mists of tears that blinded her.

Just as the boat slowly swept past the end of the dock she saw him right at the last post so that he could watch the boat uninterruptedly until it was out of sight. He was crying himself now — crying like a child, and as the boat swung away he called up, "My little Peg! Peg o' my Heart!" How she longed to get off that ship and go back to him! They stood waving to each other as long as they remained in sight.

While the ship ploughed her way toward England with little Peg on board, the man whom she was crossing the Atlantic to meet died quietly one morning with no one near him.

The nurse found Mr. Kingsnorth smiling peacefully as though asleep. He had been dead several hours.

Near him on the table was a cable despatch from New York:

My daughter sailed on the *Mauretania* to-day at ten o'clock.

FRANK OWEN O'CONNELL.

BOOK IV

PEG IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

THE CHICHESTER FAMILY

Mrs. Chichester — whom we last saw under extremely distressing circumstances in Ireland — now enters prominently into the story. She was leading a secluded and charming existence in an old and picturesque villa at Scarboro, in the north of England. Although her husband had been dead for several years, she still clung to the outward symbols of mourning. It added a softness to the patrician line of her features and a touch of distinction to her manner and poise. She had an illustrious example of a life-long sorrow, and, being ever loyal, Mrs. Chichester retained the weeds of widowhood and the crêpe of affliction ever present.

She was proud indeed of her two children — about whom she had written so glowingly to her brother Nathaniel.

Alaric was the elder. In him Mrs. Chichester took the greater pride. He was so nearly being great — even from infancy — that he continually kept his mother in a condition of expectant wonder. He was *nearly* brilliant at school: at college he *almost* got his degree. He *just missed* his "blue" at cricket, and but for an unfortunate ball dribbling over the net at a critical moment in the semi-final of the tennis championships, he *might* have won the cup. He was quite philosophic about it, though, and never appeared to reproach fate for treating him so shabbily.

He was always *nearly* doing something, and kept Mrs. Chichester in a lively condition of trusting hope

and occasional disappointment. She knew he would "*arrive*" some day — come into his own: then all these half-rewarded efforts would be invaluable in the building of his character.

Her daughter, Ethel, on the other hand, was the exact antithesis to Alaric. She had never shown the slightest interest in anything since she had first looked up at the man of medicine who ushered her into the world. She regarded everything about her with the greatest complacency. She was never surprised or angry, or pleased, or depressed. Sorrow never seemed to affect her — nor joy make her smile. She looked on life as a gentle brook down whose current she was perfectly content to drift undisturbed. At least, that was the effect created in Mrs. Chichester's mind. She never thought it possible there might be latent possibilities in her impassive daughter.

While her mother admired Ethel's lofty attitude of indifference toward the world — a manner that bespoke the aristocrat — she secretly chafed at her daughter's lack of enthusiasm.

How different to Alaric — always full of *nearly* new *ideas*: always *about* to do something. Alaric kept those around him on the alert — no one ever really knew what he would do next. On the other hand, Ethel depressed by her stolid content with everything about her. Every one *knew* what she would do — or thought they did.

Mrs. Chichester had long since abandoned any further attempt to interest her brother Nathaniel in the children.

Angela's wretched marriage had upset everything.— driven Nathaniel to be a recluse and to close his doors on near and distant relatives.

Angela's death the following year did not relieve the situation. If anything, it intensified it, since she left a

baby that, naturally, none of the family could possibly take the slightest notice of — nor interest in.

It was tacitly agreed never to speak of the unfortunate incident, especially before the children. It was such a terrible example for Ethel, and so discouraging to the eager and ambitious Alaric.

Consequently Angela's name was never spoken inside of Regal Villa.

And so the Chichester family pursued an even course, only varied by Alaric's sudden and *definite* decisions to enter either public life, or athletics, or the army, or the world of art — it was really extremely hard for so well-equipped a young man to decide to limit himself to any one particular pursuit. Consequently he put off the final choice from day to day.

Suddenly a most untoward incident happened.

Alaric, returning from a long walk, alone — during which he had *almost* decided to become a doctor — walked in through the windows from the garden into the living-room and found his mother in tears, an open letter in her hand.

This was most unusual. Mrs. Chichester was not wont to give vent to open emotion. It shows a lack of breeding. So she always suppressed it. It seemed to grow inwards. To find her weeping — and almost audibly — impressed Alaric that something of more than usual importance had occurred.

"Hello, Mater!" he cried cheerfully, though his looks belied the buoyancy of his tone. "Hullo! what's the matter? What's up?"

At the same moment Ethel came in through the door.

It was 11:30, and at precisely that time every morning Ethel practised for half an hour on the piano. Not that she had the slightest interest in music, but it helped

the morning so much. She would look forward to it for an hour before, and think of it for an hour afterwards — and then it was lunch-time. It practically filled out the entire morning.

Mrs. Chichester looked up as her beloved children came toward her — and *real* tears were in her eyes, and a *real* note of alarm was in her voice:

"Oh Ethel! Oh Alaric!"

Alaric was at her side in a moment. He was genuinely alarmed.

Ethel moved slowly across, thinking, vaguely, that something must have disagreed with her mother.

"What *is* it, mater?" cried Alaric.

"Mother!" said Ethel, with as nearly a tone of emotion as she could feel.

"We're ruined!" sobbed Mrs. Chichester.

"Nonsense!" said the bewildered son.

"Really?" asked the placid daughter.

"Our bank has failed! Every penny your poor father left me was in it," wailed Mrs. Chichester. "We've nothing. Nothing. We're beggars."

A horrible fear for a moment gripped Alaric — the dread of poverty. He shivered! Suppose such a thing should really happen? Then he dismissed it with a shrug of his shoulders. How perfectly absurd! Poverty, indeed! The Chichesters beggars? Such nonsense! He turned to his mother and found her holding out a letter and a newspaper. He took them both and read them with mingled amazement and disgust. First the headline of the newspaper caught his eye:

"Failure of Gifford's Bank."

Then he looked at the letter:

"Gifford's Bank suspended business yesterday!" Back his eye travelled to the paper:

"Gifford's Bank has closed its doors!" He was quite unable, at first, to grasp the full significance of the contents of that letter and newspaper. He turned to Ethel:

"Eh?" he gasped.

"Pity," she murmured, trying to find a particular piece of music amongst the mass on the piano.

"We're ruined!" reiterated Mrs. Chichester.

Then the real meaning of those cryptic headlines and the business-like letter broke in on Alaric. All the Chichester blood was roused in him.

"Now that's what I call a downright, rotten, blackguardly shame — a *blackguardly shame!*" His voice rose in tones as it increased in intensity until it almost reached a shriek.

Something was expected of him. At any rate indignation. Well, he was certainly indignant.

"Closed its doors, indeed!" he went on. "Why should it close its doors? That's what I want to know! Why — should — it?" and he glared at the unoffending letter and the non-committal newspaper.

He looked at Ethel, who was surreptitiously concealing a yawn, and was apparently quite undisturbed by the appalling news.

He found no inspiration there.

Back he went to his mother for support.

"What *right* have banks to fail? There should be a law against it. They should be made to *open* their doors and *keep* 'em open. That's what we give 'em our money for — so that we can take it out again when we want it."

Poor Mrs. Chichester shook her head sadly.

"Everything gone," she moaned. "Ruined! and at my age!"

"Nice kettle of fish," was all Alaric could think of. He was momentarily stunned. He turned once more to

Ethel. He never relied on her very much, but at this particular crisis he would like to have some expression of opinion, however slight — from her.

"I say, Ethel, it's a nice kettle of fish all a-boilin', eh?"

"Shame!" she said quietly, as she found the particular movement of Grieg she had been looking for. She loved Grieg. He fitted into all her moods. She played everything he composed exactly the same. She seemed to think it soothed her. She would play some now and soothe her mother and Alaric.

She began an impassioned movement which she played evenly and correctly, and without any unseemly force.

Alaric cried out distractedly: "For goodness' sake stop that, Ethel! Haven't you got any feelings? Can't you see how upset the mater is? And *I* am? Stop it. There's a dear! Let's put our backs into this thing and thrash it all out. Have a little family meetin', as it were."

Poor Mrs. Chichester repeated, as though it were some refrain: "Ruined! At my age!"

Alaric sat on the edge of her chair and put his arm around her shoulder and tried to comfort her.

"Don't you worry, mater," he said. "Don't worry. I'll go down and tell 'em what I think of 'em — exactly what I think of 'em. They can't play the fool with me. I should think *not*, indeed. Listen, mater. You've got a *son*, thank God, and one no *bank* can take any liberties with. What we put in there we've got to have out. That's all I can say. We've simply got to have it out. There! I've said it!"

Alaric rose, and drawing himself up to his full five feet six inches of manhood glared malignantly at some imaginary bank officials. His whole nature was roused.

The future of the family depended on him. They would not depend in vain. He looked at Ethel, who was trying to make the best of the business by smiling agreeably on them both.

"It's bankrupt!" wailed Mrs. Chichester.

"Failed!" suggested Ethel, cheerfully.

"We're beggars," continued the mother. "I must live on charity for the rest of my life. The guest of relations I've hated the sight of and who have hated me. It's dreadful! Dreadful!"

All Alaric's first glow of manly enthusiasm began to cool.

"Don't you think we'll get anything?" By accident he turned to Ethel. She smiled meaninglessly and said for the first time with any real note of conviction:

"Nothing!"

Alaric sat down gloomily beside his mother.

"I always thought bank directors were *blighters*. Good Lord, what a mess!" He looked the picture of misery. "What's to become of Ethel, mater?"

"Whoever shelters me must shelter Ethel as well," replied the mother sadly. "But it's hard — at *my age* — to be — *sheltered*."

Alaric looked at Ethel, and a feeling of pity came over him. It was distinctly to his credit — since his own wrongs occupied most of his attention. But after all *he* could buffet the world and wring a living out of it. All *he* had to do was to make up his mind which walk in life to choose. He was fortunate.

But Ethel, reared from infancy in the environment of independence: it would come very hard and bitter on her.

Alaric just touched Ethel's hand, and with as much feeling as he could muster, he said:

"Shockin' tough, old girl."

Ethel shook her head almost determinedly and said, somewhat enigmatically, and *for her*, heatedly:

"*No!*"

"No?" asked Alaric. "*No — what?*"

"Charity!" said Ethel.

"Cold-blooded word," and Alaric shuddered. "What will you do, Ethel?"

"Work."

"At what?"

"Teach."

"*Teach?* Who in the wide world can *you* teach?"

"Children."

Alaric laughed mirthlessly. "Oh, come, that's rich! Eh, mater? Fancy Ethel teachin' grubby little brats their A B C's! Tush!"

"Must!" said Ethel, quite unmoved.

"*A Chichester teach?*" said Alaric, in disgust.

"Settled!" from Ethel, and she swept her fingers slowly across the piano.

"Very well," said Alaric, determinedly: "I'll work, too."

Mrs. Chichester looked up pleadingly.

Alaric went on: "I'll put *my* hand to the plough. The more I think of it the keener I am to begin. From to-day I'll be a workin' man."

At this Ethel laughed a queer, little, odd, supercilious note, summed up in a single word: "Ha!" There was nothing mirthful in it. There was no reproach in it. It was just an expression of her honest feeling at the bare suggestion of her brother *working*.

Alaric turned quickly to her:

"And may I ask *why* that 'Ha!'? *Why*, I ask you?

There's nothing I couldn't do if I were really put to it — not a single thing. Is there, mater?"

His mother looked up proudly at him.

"I know that, dear. But it's dreadful to think of *you — working*."

"Not at all," said Alaric, "I'm just tingling all over at the thought of it. The only reason I haven't so far is because I've never *had* to. But now that I *have*, I'll just buckle on my armour, so to speak, and astonish you all."

Again came that deadly, cold, unsympathetic "Ha!" from Ethel.

"Please don't laugh in that cheerless way, Ethel. It goes all down my spine. Jerry's always tellin' me I ought to do something — that the world is for the worker — and all that. He's right, and I'm goin' to show him." He suddenly picked up the paper and looked at the date. "What's to-day? The *first?* Yes, so it is. June the first. Jerry's comin' to-day — all his family, too. They've taken '*Noel's Folly*' on the hill. He's sure to look in here. Couldn't be better. He's the cove to turn to in a case like this."

Jarvis, a white-haired, dignified butler who had served the family man and boy, came in at this juncture with a visiting card on a salver.

Alaric picked it up and glanced at it. He gave an expression of disgust and flung the card back on the salver.

"Christian Brent."

For the first time Ethel showed more than a passing gleam of interest. She stopped strumming the piano and stood up, very erect and very still.

Mrs. Chichester rose too: "I can't see any one," she said imperatively.

"Nor I," added Alaric. "I'm all strung up." He turned to Jarvis. "Tell Mr. Brent we're very sorry, but —"

"*I'll* see him," interrupted Ethel, almost animatedly. "Bring Mr. Brent here, Jarvis."

As Jarvis went in search of Mr. Brent, Mrs. Chichester went up the great stairs: "My head is throbbing; I'll go to my room."

"Don't you worry, mater," consoled Alaric. "Leave everything to me. I'll thrash the whole thing out — absolutely thrash it out."

As Mrs. Chichester disappeared, Alaric turned to his calm sister, who, strangely enough, was showing some signs of life and interest.

"Awful business, Ethel, eh?"

"Pretty bad."

"Really goin' to teach?"

"Yes."

"Right! I'll find somethin', too. Very likely a doctor. We'll pull through somehow."

Ethel made a motion toward the door as though to stop any further conversation.

"Mr. Brent's coming," she said, almost impatiently.

Alaric started for the windows leading into the garden.

"Jolly good of you to let him bore you. I hate the sight of the beggar, myself. Always looks to me like the first conspirator at a play."

The door opened, and Jarvis entered and ushered in "Mr. Brent." Alaric hurried into the garden.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIAN BRENT

A few words of description of Christian Brent might be of interest, since he represents a type that society always has with it.

They begin by deceiving others: they end by deceiving themselves.

Christian Brent was a dark, tense, eager, scholarly-looking man of twenty-eight years of age. His career as a diplomatist was halted at its outset by an early marriage with the only daughter of a prosperous manufacturer. Brent was moderately independent in his own right, but the addition of his wife's dowry seemed to destroy all ambition. He no longer found interest in carrying messages to the various legations or embassies of Europe, or in filling a routine position as some one's secretary. From being an intensely eager man of affairs he drifted into a social lounger — the lapdog of the drawing-room — where the close breath of some rare perfume meant more than the clash of interests, and the conquest of a woman greater than that of a nation.

Just at this period Ethel Chichester was the especial object of his adoration.

Her beauty appealed to him.

Her absolute indifference to him stung him as a taunt. It seemed to belittle his powers of attraction. Consequently he redoubled his efforts.

Ethel showed neither like nor dislike — just a form of toleration. Brent accepted this as a dog a crumb, in the hope of something more substantial to follow. He

had come that morning with a fixed resolve. His manner was determined. His voice wooed as a caress. He went tenderly to Ethel the moment the door closed on Jarvis.

"How are you?" he asked, and there was a note of subdued passion in his tone.

"Fair," replied Ethel, without even looking at him.

"Where is your mother?" suggesting that much depended on the answer.

"Lying down," answered Ethel, truthfully and without any feeling.

"And Alaric?"

"In the garden."

"Then we have a moment or two — alone?" Brent put a world of meaning into the suggestion.

"Very likely," said Ethel, picking up a score of Bohême and looking at it as if she saw it for the first time: all the while watching him through her half-closed eyes.

Brent went to her. "Glad to see me?" he asked.

"Why not?"

"I am glad to see you." He bent over her. "More than glad."

"Really?"

He sat beside her: "Ethel," he whispered intensely: "I am at the Cross-roads."

"Oh?" commented Ethel, without any interest.

"It came last night."

"Did it?"

"This is the end — between Sybil and myself."

"Is it?"

"Yes — the end. It's been horrible from the first — horrible. There's not a word of mine — not an action — she doesn't misunderstand."

"How boring," said Ethel blandly.

"She would see harm even in *this!*"

"Why?"

"She'd think I was here to — to —" he stopped.

"*What?*" innocently inquired Ethel.

"Make love to you," and he looked earnestly into her eyes.

She met his look quite frankly and astonished him with the question: "Well? Aren't you?"

He rose anxiously: "Ethel!"

"Don't you always?" persisted Ethel.

"Has it seemed like that to you?"

"Yes," she answered candidly. "By insinuation: never straightforwardly."

"Has it offended you?"

"Then you admit it?"

"Oh," he cried passionately, "I wish I *had* the right to — to —" again he wavered.

"Yes?" and Ethel looked straight at him.

"Make love to you straightforwardly." He felt the supreme moment had almost arrived. Now, he thought, he would be rewarded for the long waiting; the endless siege to this marvellous woman who concealed her real nature beneath that marble casing of an assumed indifference.

He waited eagerly for her answer. When it came it shocked and revolted him.

Ethel dropped her gaze from his face and said, with the suspicion of a smile playing around her lips:

"If you *had* the right to make love to me straightforwardly — you wouldn't do it."

He looked at her in amazement.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"It's only because you haven't the right that you do it — by suggestion," Ethel pursued.

"How can you say that?" And he put all the heart he was capable of into the question.

"You don't deny it," she said quietly.

He breathed hard and then said bitterly:

"What a contemptible opinion you must have of me."

"Then we're quits, aren't we?"

"How?" he asked.

"Haven't *you* one of *me?*"

"Of *you?* Why, Ethel —"

"Surely every married man *must* have a contemptible opinion of the woman he covertly makes love to. If he hadn't he couldn't do it, could he?" Once again she levelled her cold, impassive eyes on Brent's flushed face.

"I don't follow you," was all Brent said.

"Haven't you had time to think of an answer?"

"I don't know what you're driving at," he added.

Ethel smiled her most enigmatical smile:

"No? I think you do." She waited a moment. Brent said nothing. This was a new mood of Ethel's. It baffled him.

Presently she relieved the silence by asking him:

"What happened last night?"

He hesitated. Then he answered:

"I'd rather not say. I'd sound like a cad blaming a woman."

"Never mind how it sounds. Tell it. It must have been amusing."

"Amusing? Good God!" He bent over her again. "Oh, the more I look at you and listen to you, the more I realise I should never have married."

"Why *did* you?" came the cool question.

Brent answered with all the power at his command. Here was the moment to lay his heart bare that Ethel might see.

"Have you ever seen a young hare, fresh from its kind, run headlong into a snare? Have you ever seen a young man free of the trammels of college, dash into a *net? I* did! I wasn't trap-wise!"

He paced the room restlessly, all the self-pity rising in him. He went on:

"Good God! what nurslings we are when we first feel our feet! We're like children just loose from the leading-strings. Anything that glitters catches us. Every trap that is set for our unwary feet we drop into. I did. Dropped in. Caught hand and foot — mind and soul."

"*Soul?*" queried Ethel, with a note of doubt.

"Yes," he answered.

"Don't you mean *body?*" she suggested.

"Body, mind *and* soul!" he said, with an air of finality.

"Well, *body* anyway," summed up Ethel.

"And for what?" he went on. "For *what?* Love! Companionship! That is what we build on in marriage. And what did *I* realise? Hate and wrangling! Wrangling — just as the common herd, with no advantages, wrangle, and make it a part of their lives — the zest to their union. It's been my curse."

"Why wrangling?" drawled Ethel.

"She didn't understand."

"*You?*" asked Ethel, in surprise.

"My thoughts! My actions!"

"How curious."

"You mean *you* would?"

"Probably."

"I'm sure of it." He tried to take her hand. She

drew it away, and settled herself comfortably to listen again:

"Tell me more about your wife."

"The slightest attention shown to any other woman meant a ridiculous — a humiliating scene."

"Humiliating?"

"Isn't doubt and suspicion humiliating?"

"It would be a compliment in some cases."

"How?"

"It would put a fictitious value on some men."

"You couldn't humiliate in that way," he ventured, slowly.

"No. I don't think I could. If a man showed a preference for any other woman she would be quite welcome to him."

"No man could!" said Brent, insinuatingly.

She looked at him coldly a moment.

"Let me see — where were you? Just married, weren't you? Go on."

"Then came the baby!" He said that with a significant meaning and paused to see the effect on Ethel. If it had any, Ethel effectually concealed it. Her only comment was:

"Ah!"

Brent went on:

"One would think *that* would change things. But no. Neither of us wanted her. Neither of us love her. Children should come of love — not hate. And she is a child of hate." He paused, looking intently at Ethel. She looked understandingly at him, then dropped her eyes.

Brent went on as if following up an advantage: "She sits in her little chair, her small, wrinkled, old disillu-

sioned face turned to us, with the eyes watching us accusingly. She submits to caresses as though they were distasteful: as if she knew they were lies. At times she pushes the nearing face away with her little baby fingers." He stopped, watching her eagerly. Her eyes were down.

"I shouldn't tell you this. It's terrible. I see it in your face. What are you thinking?"

"I'm sorry," replied Ethel simply.

"For me?"

"For your wife."

"*My wife?*" he repeated, aghast.

"Yes," said Ethel. "Aren't you? No? Are you just sorry for yourself?"

Brent turned impatiently away. So this laying-open the wound in his life was nothing to Ethel. Instead of pity for him all it engendered in her was sorrow for his wife.

How little women understood him.

There was a pathetic catch in his voice as he turned to Ethel and said reproachfully:

"You think me purely selfish?"

"Naturally," she answered quickly. "*I am.* Why not be truthful about ourselves sometimes? Eh?"

"We quarrelled last night — about you!" he said desperately.

"Really?"

"Gossip has linked us together. My wife has heard it and put the worst construction on it."

"Well?"

"We said things to each other last night that can never be forgiven or forgotten. I left the house and walked the streets — hours! I looked my whole life

back and through as though it were some stranger's." He turned abruptly away to the windows and stayed a moment, looking down the drive.

Ethel said nothing.

He came back to her in a few moments.

"I tell you we ought to be taught — we ought to be taught, when we are young, what marriage really means, just as we are taught not to steal, nor lie, nor sin. In marriage we do all three — when we're ill-mated. We steal affection from some one else, we lie in our lives and we sin in our relationship."

Ethel asked him very quietly:

"Do you mean that *you* are a sinner, a thief, and a liar?"

Brent looked at her in horror.

"Oh, take some of the blame," said Ethel; "don't put it all on the woman."

"You've never spoken to me like this before."

"I've often wanted to," replied Ethel. Then she asked him: "What do you intend doing?"

"Separate," he answered, eagerly. "You don't doctor a poisoned limb when your life depends on it, you cut it off. When two lives generate a deadly poison face the problem as a surgeon would. Amputate."

"And after the operation? What then?" asked Ethel.

"That is why I am here facing you. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Oh, dear, yes. Perfectly. I have been waiting for you to get to the point."

"Ethel!" and he impulsively stretched out his arms as though to embrace her.

She drew back slightly, just out of his reach.

"Wait." She looked up at him, quizzically: "Sup-

pose *we* generate poison? What would you do? Amputate me?"

"You are different from all other women."

"Didn't you tell your wife that when you asked her to marry you?"

He turned away impatiently: "Don't say those things, Ethel, they hurt."

"I'm afraid, Christian, I'm too frank, aren't I?"

"You stand alone, Ethel. You seem to look into the hearts of people and know why and how they beat."

"I do — sometimes. It's an awkward faculty."

He looked at her glowingly: "How marvellously different two women can be! *You* — my wife."

Ethel shook her head and smiled her calm, dead smile: "We're not really very different, Christian. Only some natures like change. Yours does. And the *new* have all the virtues. Why, I might not last as long as your wife did."

"Don't say that. We have a common bond — *understanding*."

"Think so?"

"I understand you."

"I wonder."

"You do me."

"Yes — that is just the difficulty."

"I tell you I am at the cross-roads. The fingerboard points the way to me distinctly."

"Does it?"

"It does." He leaned across to her: "Would you risk it?"

"What?" she asked.

"I'll hide nothing. I'll put it all before you. The snubs of your friends. The whisper of a scandal that would grow into a roar. Afraid to open a newspaper.

fearing what might be printed in it. Life, at first, in some little Continental village — dreading the passers through — keeping out of sight lest they would recognise one. No. It wouldn't be fair to you."

Ethel thought a moment, then answered slowly:

"No, Chris, I don't think it would."

"You see I *am* a cad — just a selfish cad!"

"Aren't you?" and she smiled up at him.

"I'll never speak of this again. I wouldn't have *now* — only — I'm distracted to-day — completely distracted. Will you forgive me for speaking as I did?"

"Certainly," said Ethel. "I'm not offended. On the contrary. Anyway, I'll think it over and let you know."

"You will, *really?*" he asked greedily, grasping at the straw of a hope. "You will really think it over?"

"I will, really."

"And when she sets me free," he went on, "we could, we could —" He suddenly stopped.

She looked coolly at him as he hesitated and said: "It *is* a difficult little word at times, isn't it?"

"*Would* you marry me?" he asked, with a supreme effort.

"I never cross my bridges until I come to them," said Ethel, languidly. "And we're such a long way from *that* one, aren't we?"

"Then I am to wait?"

"Yes. Do," she replied. "When the time comes to accept the charity of relations, or do something useful for tuppence a week, Bohemian France or Italy — but then the runaways always go to France or Italy, don't they? — Suppose we say Hungary? Shall we?"

He did not answer.

She went on: "Very well. When I have to choose

between charity and labour, Bohemian Hungary may beckon me."

He looked at her in a puzzled way. What new mood was this?

"Charity?" he asked. "Labour?"

"Yes. It has come to that. A tiresome bank has failed with all our sixpences locked up in it. Isn't it stupid?"

"Is *all* your money gone?"

"I think so."

"Good God!"

"Dear mamma knows as little about business as she does about me. Until this morning she has always had a rooted belief in her bank and her daughter. If I bolt with you, her last cherished illusion will be destroyed."

"Let me help you," he said eagerly.

"How?" and she looked at him again with that cold, hard scrutiny. "Lend us money, do you mean?"

He fell into the trap.

"Yes," he said. "I'd do that if you'd let me."

She gave just the suggestion of a sneer and turned deliberately away.

He felt the force of the unspoken reproof:

"I beg your pardon," he said humbly.

She went on as if she had not heard the offensive suggestion: "So you see we're both, in a way, at the cross-roads."

He seized her hand fiercely: "Let me take you away out of it all!" he cried.

She withdrew her hand slowly.

"No," she said, "not just now. I'm not in a bolting mood to-day."

He moved away. She watched him. Then she called him to her. Something in the man attracted this strange

nature. She could not analyse or define the attraction. But the impelling force was there.

He went to her.

Ethel spoke to him for the first time softly, languorously, almost caressingly:

"Chris! Sometime — perhaps in the dead of night — something will snap in me — the slack, selfish, luxurious *me*, that hates to be roused into action, and the craving for adventure will come. Then I'll send for you."

He took her hand again and this time she did not draw it away. He said in a whisper:

"And you'll go with me?"

Ethel stretched lazily and smiled at him through her half-closed eyes.

"I suppose so. Then Heaven help you!"

"Why should we wait?" he cried.

"It will give us the suspense of expectation."

"I want you! I need you!" he pleaded.

"Until the time comes for *amputation?*"

"Don't! Don't!" and he dropped her hand suddenly.

"Well, I don't want you to have any illusions about me, Chris. I have none about you. Let us begin fair anyway. It will be so much easier when the end comes."

"There will be no end," he said passionately. "I love you — love you with every breath of my body, every thought in my mind, every throb of my nerves. I love you!" He kissed her hand repeatedly. "I love you!" He took her in his arms and pressed her to him.

She struggled with him without any anger, or disgust, or fear. As she put him away from her she just said simply:

"Please don't. It's so hot this morning."

As she turned away from him she was struck dumb.

Sitting beside the table in the middle of the room, her back turned to them, was the strangest, oddest little figure Ethel had ever seen.

Who was she? How long had she been in the room?

Ethel turned to Brent. He was quite pale now and was nervously stroking his slight moustache.

Ethel was furious! It was incredible that Brent could have been so indiscreet!

How on earth did that creature get there without their hearing or seeing her?

Ethel went straight to the demure little figure sitting on the chair.

CHAPTER III

PEG ARRIVES IN ENGLAND

PEG's journey to England was one of the unhappiest memories of her life. She undertook the voyage deliberately to please her father, because he told her it would please him. But beneath this feeling of pleasing him was one of sullen resentment at being made to separate from him.

She planned all kinds of reprisals upon the unfortunate people she was going amongst. She would be so rude to them and so unbearable that they would be glad to send her back on the next boat. She schemed out her whole plan of action. She would contradict and disobey and berate and belittle. Nothing they would do would be right to her and nothing she would do or say would be right to them. She took infinite pleasure in her plan of campaign. Then when she was enjoying the pleasure of such resentful dreams she would think of her father waiting for news of her: of his pride in her: of how much he wanted her to succeed. She would realise how much the parting meant to *him*, and all her little plots would tumble down and she would resolve to try and please her relations, learn all she could, succeed beyond all expression and either go back to America prosperous, or send for her father to join her in England. All her dreams had her father, either centrifugally or centripetally, beating through them.

She refused all advances of friendship aboard ship. No one dared speak to her. She wanted to be alone in her sorrow. She and "*Michael*" would romp on the

lower deck, by favour of one of the seamen, who would keep a sharp look-out for officers.

This seaman — O'Farrell by name — took quite a liking to Peg and the dog and did many little kindly, gracious acts to minister to the comfort of both of them.

He warned her that they would not let "*Michael*" go with her from the dock until he had first been quarantined. This hurt Peg more than anything could. She burst into tears. To have "*Michael*" taken from her would be the last misfortune. She would indeed be alone in that strange country. She was inconsolable.

O'Farrell, at last, took it on himself to get the dog ashore. He would wrap him up in some sail cloths, and then he would carry "*Michael*" outside the gates when the Customs' authorities had examined her few belongings.

When they reached Liverpool O'Farrell was as good as his word, though many were the anxious moments they had as one or other of the Customs' officers would eye the suspicious package O'Farrell carried so carelessly under his arm.

At the dock a distinguished-looking gentleman came on board and after some considerable difficulty succeeded in locating Peg. He was a well-dressed, soft-speaking, vigorous man of forty-five. He inspired Peg with an instant dislike by his somewhat authoritative and pompous manner. He introduced himself as Mr. Montgomery Hawkes, the legal adviser for the Kingsnorth estate, and at once proceeded to take charge of Peg as a matter of course.

Poor Peg felt ashamed of her poor little bag, containing just a few changes of apparel, and her little paper bundle. She was mortified when she walked down the gangway with the prosperous-looking lawyer whilst ex-

travagantly dressed people with piles of luggage dashed here and there endeavouring to get it examined.

But Mr. Hawkes did not appear to notice Peg's shabbiness. On the contrary he treated her and her belongings as though she were the most fashionable of fine ladies and her wardrobe the most complete.

Outside the gates she found O'Farrell waiting for her, with the precious "*Michael*" struggling to free himself from his coverings. Hawkes soon had a cab alongside. He helped Peg into it: then she stretched out her arms and O'Farrell opened the sail-cloths and out sprang "*Michael*," dusty and dirty and blear-eyed, but oh! such a happy, fussy, affectionate, relieved little canine when he saw his beloved owner waiting for him. He made one spring at her, much to the lawyer's dignified amazement, and began to bark at her, and lick her face and hands, and jump on and roll over and over upon Peg in an excess of joy at his release.

Peg offered O'Farrell an American dollar. She had very little left.

O'Farrell indignantly refused to take it.

"Oh, but ye must, indade ye must," cried Peg in distress. "Sure I won't lie aisy to-night if ye don't. But for you poor '*Michael*' here might have been on that place ye spoke of — that Quarantine, whatever it is. Ye saved him from that. And don't despise it because it's an American dollar. Sure it has a value all over the wurrld. An' besides I have no English money." Poor Peg pleaded that O'Farrell should take it. He had been so nice to her all the way over.

Hawkes interposed skilfully, gave O'Farrell five shillings; thanked him warmly for his kindness to Peg and her dog; returned the dollar to Peg; let her say good-bye to the kindly sailor: told the cabman to drive to a certain

railway station, and in a few seconds they were bowling along and Peg had entered a new country and a new life. They reached the railway station and Hawkes procured tickets and in half an hour they were on a train bound for the north of England.

During the journey Hawkes volunteered no information. He bought her papers and magazines and offered her lunch. This Peg refused. She said the ship had not agreed with her. She did not think she would want food for a long time to come.

After a while, tired out with the rush and excitement of the ship's arrival, Peg fell asleep.

In a few hours they reached their destination. Hawkes woke her and told her she was at her journey's end. He again hailed a cab, told the driver where to go and got in with Peg, "*Michael*" and her luggage. In the cab he handed Peg a card and told her to go to the address written on it and ask the people there to allow her to wait until he joined her. He had a business call to make in the town. He would be as short a time as possible. She was just to tell the people that she had been asked to call there and wait.

After the cab had gone through a few streets it stopped before a big building; Hawkes got out, told the cabman where to take Peg, paid him, and with some final admonitions to Peg, disappeared through the swing-doors of the Town Hall.

The cabman took the wondering Peg along until he drove up to a very handsome Elizabethan house. There he stopped. Peg looked at the name on the gate-posts and then at the name on the card Mr. Hawkes had given her. They were the same. Once more she gathered up her belongings and her dog and passed in through the gateposts and wandered up the long drive on a tour of

inspection. She walked through paths dividing rose-beds until she came to some open windows. The main entrance-hall of the house seemed to be hidden away somewhere amid the tall old trees.

Peg made straight for the open windows and walked into the most wonderful looking room she had ever seen. Everything in it was old and massive; it bespoke centuries gone by in every detail. Peg held her breath as she looked around her. Pictures and tapestries stared at her from the walls. Beautiful old vases were arranged in cabinets. The carpet was deep and soft and stifled all sound. Peg almost gave an ejaculation of surprise at the wonders of the room when she suddenly became conscious that she was not alone in the room: that others were there and that they were talking.

She looked in the direction the sounds came from and saw to her astonishment, a man with a woman in his arms. He was speaking to her in a most ardent manner. They were partially concealed by some statuary.

Peg concluded at once that she had intruded on some marital scene at which she was not desired, so she instantly sat down with her back to them.

She tried not to listen, but some of the words came distinctly to her. Just as she was becoming very uncomfortable and had half made up her mind to leave the room and find somewhere else to wait, she suddenly heard herself addressed, and in no uncertain tone of voice. There was indignation, surprise and anger in Ethel's question:

"How long have you been here?"

Peg turned round and saw a strikingly handsome, beautifully dressed young lady glaring down at her. Her manner was haughty in the extreme. Peg felt most

unhappy as she looked at her and did not answer immediately.

A little distance away was a dark, handsome young man who was looking at Peg with a certain languid interest.

"How long have you been here?" again asked Ethel.

"Sure I only came in this minnit," said Peg innocently and with a little note of fear. She was not accustomed to fine-looking, splendidly-dressed young ladies like Ethel.

"What do you want?" demanded the young lady.

"Nothin'," said Peg reassuringly.

"*Nothing?*" echoed Ethel, growing angrier every moment.

"Not a thing. I was just told to wait," said Peg.

"Who told you?"

"A gentleman," replied Peg.

"*What* gentleman?" asked Ethel sharply and suspiciously.

"Just a gentleman." Peg, after fumbling nervously in her pocket, produced the card Mr. Hawkes had given her, which "*Michael*" immediately attempted to take possession of. Peg snatched it away from the dog and handed it to the young lady.

"He told me to wait *there*."

Ethel took the card irritably and read:

"'Mrs. Chichester, Regal Villa.' And what do you want with Mrs. Chichester?" she asked Peg, at the same time looking at the shabby clothes, the hungry-looking dog, and the soiled parcel.

"I don't want anythin' with her. I was just told to wait!"

"Who are you?"

Peg was now getting angry too. There was no mistaking the manner of the proud young lady. Peg chafed under it. She looked up sullenly into Ethel's face and said:

"I was not to say a wurrd, I'm tellin' ye. I was just to wait." Peg settled back in the chair and stroked "*Michael.*" This questioning was not at all to her liking. She wished Mr. Hawkes would come and get her out of a most embarrassing position. But until he *did* she was not going to disobey his instructions. He told her to say nothing, so nothing would she say.

Ethel turned abruptly to Brent and found that gentleman looking at the odd little stranger somewhat admiringly. She gave an impatient ejaculation and turned back to Peg quickly:

"You say you have only been here a minute?"

"That's all," replied Peg. "Just a minnit."

"Were we talking when you came in?"

"Ye were."

Ethel could scarcely conceal her rage.

"Did you hear what we said?"

"Some of it. Not much," said Peg.

"*What* did you hear?"

"Please don't — it's so hot this mornin'," said Peg with no attempt at imitation — just as if she were stating a simple, ordinary occurrence.

Ethel flushed scarlet. Brent smiled.

"You refuse to say why you're here or who you are?" Ethel again asked.

"It isn't *me* that's refusin'. All the gentleman said to me was, 'Ye go to the place that's written down on the card and ye sit down there an' wait. And that's all ye do.'"

Ethel again turned to the perplexed Brent: "Eh?"

"Extraordinary!" and Brent shook his head.

The position was unbearable. Ethel decided instantly how to relieve it. She looked freezingly down at the forlorn-looking little intruder and said:

"The servants' quarters are at the back of the house."

"*Are* they?" asked Peg, without moving, and not in any way taking the statement to refer to her.

"And I may save you the trouble of *waiting* by telling you we are quite provided with servants. We do not need any further assistance."

Peg just looked at Ethel and then bent down over "*Michael.*" Ethel's last shot had struck home. Poor Peg was cut through to her soul. How she longed at that moment to be back home with her father in New York. Before she could say anything Ethel continued:

"If you insist on waiting kindly do so there."

Peg took "*Michael*" up in her arms, collected once more her packages and walked to the windows. Again she heard the cold hard tones of Ethel's voice speaking to her:

"Follow the path to your right until you come to a door. Knock and ask permission to wait there, and for your future guidance go to the *back* door of a house and *ring*, don't walk unannounced into a private room."

Peg tried to explain:

"Ye see, ma'am, I didn't know. All the gentleman said was 'Go there and wait'—"

"That will do."

"I'm sorry I disturbed yez." And she glanced at the embarrassed Brent.

"*That will do!*" said Ethel finally.

Poor Peg nodded and wandered off through the win-

dows sore at heart. She went down the path until she reached the door Ethel mentioned. She knocked at it. While she is waiting for admission we will return to the fortunes of the rudely-disturbed *lovers* (?).

CHAPTER IV

THE CHICHESTER FAMILY RECEIVES A SECOND SHOCK

Ethel turned indignantly to Brent, as the little figure went off down the path.

"Outrageous!" she cried.

"Poor little wretch." Brent walked to the windows and looked after her. "She's quite pretty."

Ethel looked understandingly at him: "*Is* she?"

"In a shabby sort of way. Didn't you think so?"

Ethel glared coldly at him.

"I never notice the lower orders. You apparently do."

"Oh, yes — often. They're very interesting — at times." He strained to get a last glimpse of the intruder:

"Do you know, she's the strangest little apparition —"

"She's only a few yards away if you care to follow her!"

Her tone brought Brent up sharply. He turned away from the window and found Ethel — arms folded, eyes flashing — waiting for him. Something in her manner alarmed him. He had gone too far.

"Why, Ethel,"— he said, as he came toward her.

"Suppose my mother had walked in here — or Alaric — instead of that creature? Never do such a thing again."

"I was carried away," he hastened to explain.

"Kindly exercise a little more restraint. You had better go now." There was a finality of dismissal in her

tone as she passed him and crossed to the great staircase. He followed her:

"May I call to-morrow?"

"No," she answered decidedly. "Not to-morrow."

"The following day, then," he urged.

"Perhaps."

"Remember — I build on you."

She looked searchingly at him:

"I suppose we *are* worthy of each other."

Through the open windows came the sound of voices.

"Go!" she said imperatively and she passed on up the stairs. Brent went rapidly to the door. Before either he could open it or Ethel go out of sight Alaric burst in through the windows.

"Hello, Brent," he cried cheerfully. "Disturbin' ye?" And he caught Ethel as she was about to disappear: "Or you, Ethel?"

Ethel turned and answered coolly:

"You've not disturbed me."

"I'm just going," said Brent.

"Well, wait a moment," and Alaric turned to the window and beckoned to someone on the path and in from the garden came Mr. Montgomery Hawkes.

"Come in," said the energetic Alaric. "Come in. Ethel, I want you to meet Mr. Hawkes — Mr. Hawkes — my sister. Mr. Brent — Mr. Hawkes." Having satisfactorily introduced everyone he said to Ethel: "See if the mater's well enough to come down, like a dear, will ye? This gentleman has come from London to see her. D'ye mind? And come back yourself, too, like an angel. He says he has some business that concerns the whole family."

Ethel disappeared without a word.

Alaric bustled Hawkes into a chair and then seized the

somewhat uncomfortable Brent by an unwilling hand and shook it warmly as he asked:

"*Must* you go?"

"Yes," replied Brent with a sigh of relief.

Alaric dashed to the door and opened it as though to speed the visitor on his way.

"So sorry I was out when you called," lied Alaric nimbly. "Run in any time. Always delighted to see you. Delighted. Is the angel wife all well?"

Brent bowed: "Thank you."

"And the darling child?"

Brent frowned. He crossed to the door and turned in the frame and admonished Alaric:

"Please give my remembrances to your mother." Then he passed out. As he disappeared the irrepressible Alaric called after him:

"Certainly. She'll be *so* disappointed not to have seen you. Run in any time — any time at all." Alaric closed the door and saw his mother and Ethel coming down the stairs.

All traces of emotion had disappeared from Ethel's face and manner. She was once again in perfect command of herself. She carried a beautiful little French poodle in her arms and was feeding her with sugar.

Alaric fussily brought his mother forward.

"Mater, dear," he said; "I found this gentleman in a rose-bed enquiring the way to our lodge. He's come all the way from dear old London just to see you. Mr. Hawkes — my mother."

Mrs. Chichester looked at Hawkes anxiously.

"You have come to see me?"

"On a very important and a very *private* family matter," replied Hawkes, gravely.

"*Important? Private?*" asked Mrs. Chichester in surprise.

"We're the family, Mr. Hawkes," ventured Alaric, helpfully.

Mrs. Chichester's forebodings came uppermost. After the news of the bank's failure nothing would surprise her now in the way of calamity. What could this grave, dignified-looking man want with them? Her eyes filled.

"Is it *bad* news?" she faltered.

"Oh, dear, no," answered Mr. Hawkes, genially.

"Well — is it *good* news?" queried Alaric.

"In a measure," said the lawyer.

"Then for heaven's sake get at it. You've got me all clammy. We could do with a little good news. Wait a minute! Is it by any chance about the *bank?*"

"No," replied Mr. Hawkes. He cleared his throat and said solemnly and impressively to Mrs. Chichester:

"It is about your *late* brother — Nathaniel Kingsnorth."

"Late!" cried Mrs. Chichester. "Is Nathaniel *dead?*"

"Yes, madam," said Hawkes gravely. "He died ten days ago."

Mrs. Chichester sat down and silently wept. Nathaniel to have died without her being with him to comfort him and arrange things with him! It was most unfortunate.

Alaric tried to feel sorry, but inasmuch as his uncle had always refused to see him he could not help thinking it may have been retribution. However, he tried to show a fair and decent measure of regret.

"Poor old Nat," he cried. "Eh, Ethel?"

"Never saw him," answered Ethel, her face and voice totally without emotion.

"You say he died ten days ago?" asked Mrs. Chichester.

Mr. Hawkes bowed.

"Why was I not informed? The funeral — ?"

"There was no funeral," replied Mr. Hawkes.

"No funeral?" said Alaric in astonishment.

"No," replied the lawyer. "In obedience to his written wishes he was cremated and no one was present except the chief executor and myself. If I may use Mr. Kingsnorth's words without giving pain, he said he so little regretted not having seen any of his relations for the last twenty years of his life-time he was sure *they* would regret equally little his death. On no account was anyone to wear mourning for him, nor were they to express any open sorrow. 'They wouldn't *feel* it, so why lie about it?' I use his own words," added Mr. Hawkes, as if disclaiming all responsibility for such a remarkable point of view.

"What a rum old bird!" remarked Alaric, contemplatively.

Mrs. Chichester wept as she said:

"He was always the most unfeeling, the most heartless — the most —"

"Now in his will —" interrupted the lawyer, producing a leather pocket-book filled with important-looking papers: "In his will —" he repeated —

Mrs. Chichester stopped crying:

"Eh? A will?"

"What?" said Alaric, beaming: "did the dear old gentleman leave a will?"

Even Ethel stopped playing with "*Pet*" and listened languidly to the conversation.

Mr. Hawkes, realising he had their complete interest, went on importantly:

"As Mr. Kingsnorth's legal adviser up to the time of his untimely death I have come here to make you acquainted with some of its contents."

He spread a formidable-looking document wide-open on the table, adjusted his pince-nez and prepared to read.

"Dear old Nat!" said Alaric reflectively. "Do you remember, mater, we met him at Victoria Station once when I was little more than a baby? Yet I can see him now as plainly as if it were yesterday. A portly, sandy-haired old buck, with three jolly chins."

"He was *white* toward the end, and very, very thin," said Mr. Hawkes softly.

"Was he?" from Alaric. "Fancy that. It just shows, mater, doesn't it?" He bent eagerly over the table as Hawkes traced some figures with a pencil on one of the pages of the will.

"How much did he leave?" And Alaric's voice rose to a pitch of well-defined interest.

"His estate is valued, approximately, at some two hundred thousand pounds," replied the lawyer.

Alaric gave a long, low whistle, and smiled a broad, comprehensive smile.

Ethel for the first time showed a gleam of genuine interest.

Mrs. Chichester began to cry again. "Perhaps it was my fault I didn't see him oftener," she said.

Alaric, unable to curb his curiosity, burst out with: "How did the old boy split it up?"

"To his immediate relations he left —" Mr. Hawkes looked up from the will and found three pairs of eyes fixed on him. He stopped. It may be that constant association with the law courts destroys faith in human nature — but whatever the cause, it seemed to Mr. Hawkes in each of these eyes was reflected the one dom-

inant feeling — *greed.* The expression in the family's combined eyes was astonishing in its directness, its barefacedness. It struck the dignified gentleman suddenly dumb.

"Well? Well?" cried Alaric. "How much? Don't stop right in the middle of an important thing like that. You make me as nervous as a chicken."

Mr. Hawkes returned to the will and after looking at it a moment without reading said:

"To his immediate relations Mr. Kingsnorth left, I regret to say — *nothing.*"

A momentary silence fell like a pall over the stricken Chichester family.

Mrs. Chichester rose, indignation flashing from the eyes that a moment since showed a healthy hope.

"Nothing?" she cried incredulously.

"Not a penny-piece to anyone?" ventured Alaric.

The faintest suspicion of a smile flitted across Ethel's face.

Hawkes looked keenly at them and answered:

"I deeply regret to say — *nothing.*"

Mrs. Chichester turned to Ethel, who had begun to stroke "*Pet*" again.

"His own flesh and blood!" cried the poor lady.

"What a shabby old beggar!" commented Alaric, indignantly.

"He was always the most selfish, the most —" began Mrs. Chichester, when Mr. Hawkes, who had been turning over the pages of the document before him, gave an ejaculation of relief:

"Ah! Here we have it. This, Mrs. Chichester, is how Mr. Kingsnorth expressed his attitude toward his relations in his last will and testament.

"'I am the only member of the Kingsnorth family who

ever made any money. All my precious relations either inherited it or married to get it.'—"

"I assure you —" began Mrs. Chichester.

Alaric checked her: "Half a moment, mater. Let us hear it out to the bitter end. He must have been an amusin' old gentleman!"

Mr. Hawkes resumed: "—'consequently I am not going to leave one penny to relations who are already well-provided for.'"

Mrs. Chichester protested vehemently:

"But we are *not* provided for."

"No," added Alaric. "Our bank's bust."

"We're ruined," sobbed Mrs. Chichester.

"Broke!" said Alaric.

"We've nothing!" wailed the old lady.

"Not thruppence," from the son.

"Dear, dear," said the lawyer. "How extremely painful."

"*Painful?* That's not the word. Disgustin' I call it," corrected Alaric.

Mr. Hawkes thought a moment. Then he said: "Under those circumstances, perhaps a clause in the will may have a certain interest and an element of relief."

As two drowning people clinging to the proverbial straws the mother and son waited breathlessly for Mr. Hawkes to go on.

Ethel showed no interest whatever.

"When Mr. Kingsnorth realised that he had not very much longer to live he spoke constantly of his other sister — Angela," resumed Mr. Hawkes.

"Angela?" cried Mrs. Chichester in surprise; "why, she is dead."

"That was why he spoke of her," said Hawkes gravely.

"And not a word of *me?*" asked Mrs. Chichester.

"We will come to that a little later," and Mr. Hawkes again referred to the will. "It appears that this sister Angela married at the age of twenty, a certain Irishman by name O'Connell, and was cut off by her family —"

"The man was an agitator — a Fenian agitator. He hadn't a penny. It was a disgrace —"

Alaric checked his mother again.

Hawkes resumed: "— was cut off by her family — went to the United States of America with her husband, where a daughter was born. After going through many conditions of misery with her husband, who never seemed to prosper, she died shortly after giving birth to the child." He looked up: "Mr. Kingsnorth elsewhere expresses his lasting regret that in one of his sister's acute stages of distress she wrote to him asking him, for the first time, to assist her. He replied: 'You have made your bed; lie in it.'"

"She had disgraced the family. He was justified," broke in Mrs. Chichester.

"With death approaching," resumed Hawkes, "Mr. Kingsnorth's conscience began to trouble him and the remembrance of his treatment of his unfortunate sister distressed him. If the child were alive he wanted to see her. I made inquiries and found that the girl was living with her father in very poor circumstances in the City of New York. We sent sufficient funds for the journey, together with a request to the father to allow her to visit Mr. Kingsnorth in England. The father consented. However, before the young girl sailed Mr. Kingsnorth died."

"Oh!" cried Alaric, who had been listening intently. "Died, eh? That was too bad. Died before seeing her. Did you let her sail, Mr. Hawkes?"

"Yes. We thought it best to bring her over here and

acquaint her with the sad news after her arrival. Had she known before sailing she might not have taken the journey."

"But what was the use of bringing her over when Mr. Kingsnorth was dead?" asked Alaric.

"For this reason," replied Hawkes: "Realising that he might never see her, Mr. Kingsnorth made the most remarkable provision for her in his will."

"Provided for *her* and not for — ?" began Mrs. Chichester.

"Here is the provision," continued Mr. Hawkes, again reading from the will: "'I hereby direct that the sum of one thousand pounds a year be paid to any respectable well-connected woman of breeding and family, who will undertake the education and up-bringing of my niece, Margaret O'Connell, in accordance with the dignity and tradition of the Kingsnorths'—"

"He remembers a niece he never saw and his own sister—" and Mrs. Chichester once more burst into tears.

"It beats cock-fighting, that's all I can say," cried Alaric. "It simply beats cock-fighting."

Mr. Hawkes went on reading: "'If at the expiration of one year my niece is found to be, in the judgment of my executors, unworthy of further interest, she is to be returned to her father and the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds a year paid her to provide her with the necessities of life. If, on the other hand, she proves herself worthy of the best traditions of the Kingsnorth family, the course of training is to be continued until she reaches the age of twenty-one, when I hereby bequeath to her the sum of five thousand pounds a year, to be paid her annually out of my estate during her life-time and to

be continued after her death to any male issue she may have — by marriage.'"

Mr. Hawkes stopped, and once again looked at the strange family. Mrs. Chichester was sobbing: "And me — his own sister —"

Alaric was moving restlessly about: "Beats anything I've heard of. Positively anything."

Ethel was looking intently at "*Pet's*" coat.

Hawkes continued: "'On no account is her father to be permitted to visit her, and should the course of training be continued after the first year, she must not on any account visit her father. After she reaches the age of twenty-one she can do as she pleases.'" Mr. Hawkes folded up the will with the air of a man who had finished an important duty.

Alaric burst out with:

"I don't see how that clause interests us in the least, Mr. Hawkes."

The lawyer removed his pince-nez and looking steadily at Mrs. Chichester said:

"Now, my dear Mrs. Chichester, it was Mr. Kingsnorth's wish that the first lady to be approached on the matter of undertaking the training of the young lady should be — *you!*"

Mrs. Chichester rose in astonishment: "I?"

Alaric arose in anger: "My mother?"

Ethel quietly pulled "*Pet's*" ear and waited.

Mr. Hawkes went on quietly:

"Mr. Kingsnorth said, 'he would be sure at least of his niece having a strict up-bringing in the best traditions of the Kingsnorths, and that though his sister Monica was somewhat narrow and conventional in ideas'— I use his own words —'still he felt sure she was eminently

fitted to undertake such a charge.' There — you have the whole object of my visit. Now — will you undertake the training of the young lady?"

"I never heard of such a thing!" cried Mrs. Chichester furiously.

"Ridiculous!" said Ethel calmly.

"Tush and nonsense," with which Alaric dismissed the whole matter.

"Then I may take it you refuse?" queried the astonished lawyer.

"Absolutely!" from Mrs. Chichester.

"Entirely!" from Ethel.

"I should say so!" and Alaric brought up the rear.

Mr. Hawkes gathered up his papers and in a tone of regret ventured: "Then there is nothing more to be said. I was only carrying out the dead man's wishes by coming here and making the facts known to you. Mr. Kingsnorth was of the opinion that you were well provided for and, that, outside of the sentimental reason that the girl was your own niece, the additional thousand pounds a year might be welcome as, say, pin-money for your daughter."

Ethel laughed her dry, cheerless little laugh. "Ha! Pin-money!"

Alaric grew suddenly grave and drew his mother and sister out of Mr. Hawkes' vicinity.

"Listen, mater — Ethel. It's a cool thousand, you know? Thousands don't grow on raspberry bushes when your hook's gone up. What do ye think, eh?"

Mrs. Chichester brightened:

"It would keep things together," she said.

"The wolf from the door," urged Alaric.

"No charity," chimed in Ethel.

Mrs. Chichester looked from daughter to son.

"Well? What do you think?"

"Whatever you say, mater," from Alaric.

"You decide, mamma," from Ethel.

"We might try it for a while, at least," said Mrs. Chichester.

"Until we can look around," agreed Alaric.

"Something may be saved from the wreck," reasoned Mrs. Chichester more hopefully.

"Until *I* get really started," said Alaric with a sense of climax.

Mrs. Chichester turned to her daughter: "Ethel?"

"Whatever you decide, mamma."

Mrs. Chichester thought a moment — then decided: "I'll do it," she said determinedly. "It will be hard, but I'll do it." She went slowly and deliberately to Mr. Hawkes, who by this time had disposed of all his documents and was preparing to go. A look in Mrs. Chichester's face stopped him. He smiled at her.

"Well?" he asked.

"For the sake of the memory of my dead sister, I will do as Nathaniel wished," said Mrs. Chichester with great dignity and self-abnegation.

Mr. Hawkes breathed a sigh of relief.

"Good!" he said. "I'm delighted. It is splendid. Now that you have decided so happily there is one thing more I must tell you. The young lady is not to be told the conditions of the will, unless at the discretion of the executors should some crisis arise. She will be to all intents and purposes — your *guest*. In that way we may be able to arrive at a more exact knowledge of her character. Is that understood?"

The family signified severally and collectively that it was.

"And now," beamed the lawyer, happy at the fortu-

nate outcome of a situation that a few moments before seemed so strained, "where is your bell?"

Alaric indicated the bell.

"May I ring?" asked the lawyer.

"Certainly," replied Alaric.

Mr. Hawkes rang.

Alaric watched him curiously: "Want a sandwich or something?"

Hawkes smiled benignly on the unfortunate family and rubbed his hands together self-satisfiedly:

"Now I would like to send for the young lady — the heiress."

"Where is she?" asked Mrs. Chichester.

"She arrived from New York this morning and I brought her straight here. I had to call on a client, so I gave her your address and told her to come here and *wait*."

At the word "*wait*" an uneasy feeling took possession of Ethel. That was the word used by that wretched-looking little creature who had so rudely intruded upon her and Brent. Could it be possible — ?

The footman entered at that moment.

The lawyer questioned him.

"Is there a young lady waiting for Mr. Hawkes?"

"A *young lady*, sir? No, sir," answered Jarvis.

Mr. Hawkes was puzzled. What in the world had become of her? He told the cabman distinctly where to go.

Jarvis opened the door to go out, when a thought suddenly occurred to him. He turned back and spoke to the lawyer:

"There's a young *person* sitting in the kitchen: came up and knocked at the door and said she had to wait until a gentleman called. Can't get nothin' out of her."

Hawkes brightened up.

"That must be Miss O'Connell," he said. He turned to Mrs. Chichester and asked her if he might bring the young lady in there.

"My niece in the kitchen!" said Mrs. Chichester to the unfortunate footman. "Surely you should know the difference between my niece and a servant!"

"I am truly sorry, madam," replied Jarvis in distress, "but there was nothing to tell."

"Another such mistake and you can leave my employment," Mrs. Chichester added severely.

Jarvis pleaded piteously:

"Upon my word, madam, no one could tell."

"That will do," thundered Mrs. Chichester. "Bring my niece here — at once."

The wretched Jarvis departed on his errand muttering to himself: "Wait until they see her. Who in the world could tell she was their relation."

Mrs. Chichester was very angry.

"It's monstrous!" she exclaimed.

"Stoopid!" agreed Alaric. "Doocid stoopid."

Ethel said nothing. The one thought that was passing through her mind was: "How much did that girl hear Brent *say* and how much did she *see* Mr. Brent *do*?"

Hawkes tried to smooth the misunderstanding out.

"I am afraid it was all my fault," he explained. "I told her not to talk. To just say that she was to wait. I wanted to have an opportunity to explain matters before introducing her."

"She should have been brought straight to me," complained Mrs. Chichester. "The poor thing." Then with a feeling of outraged pride she said: "My niece in the kitchen. A Kingsnorth mistaken for a servant!"

The door opened and Jarvis came into the room.

There was a look of half-triumph on his face as much as to say: "Now who would not make a mistake like that? Who could tell this girl was your niece?"

He beckoned Peg to come into the room.

Then the Chichester family received the second shock they had experienced that day — one compared with which the failure of the bank paled into insignificance. When they saw the strange, shabby, red-haired girl slouch into the room, with her parcels and that disgraceful-looking dog, they felt the hand of misfortune had indeed fallen upon them.

CHAPTER V

PEG MEETS HER AUNT

As Peg wandered into the room Mrs. Chichester and Alaric looked at her in horrified amazement.

Ethel took one swift glance at her and then turned her attention to "*Pet.*"

Jarvis looked reproachfully at Mrs. Chichester as much as to say: "What did I tell you?" and went out.

Alaric whispered to his mother:

"Oh, I say, really, you know — it isn't true! It *can't* be."

"*Pet*" suddenly saw "*Michael*" and began to bark furiously at him. "*Michael*" responded vigorously until Peg quieted him.

At this juncture Mr. Hawkes came forward and, taking Peg gently by the arm, reassured her by saying:

"Come here, my dear. Come here. Don't be frightened. We're all your friends."

He brought Peg over to Mrs. Chichester, who was staring at her with tears of mortification in her eyes. When Peg's eyes met her aunt's she bobbed a little curtsey she used to do as a child whenever she met a priest or some of the gentle folk.

Mrs. Chichester went cold when she saw the gauche act. Was it possible that this creature was her sister Angela's child? It seemed incredible.

"What is your name?" she asked sternly.

"Peg, ma'am."

"What?"

"Sure me name's Peg, ma'am," and she bobbed another little curtsey.

Mrs. Chichester closed her eyes and shivered. She asked Alaric to ring. As that young gentleman passed Ethel on his way to the bell he said: "It can't really be true! Eh, Ethel?"

"Quaint," was all his sister replied.

Hawkes genially drew Peg's attention to her aunt by introducing her:

"This lady is Mrs. Chichester — your aunt." Peg looked at her doubtfully a moment then turned to Hawkes and asked him:

"Where's me uncle?"

"Alas! my dear child, your uncle is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Peg in surprise. "Afther sendin' for me?"

"He died just before you sailed," added Hawkes.

"God rest his soul," said Peg piously. "Sure if I'd known that I'd never have come at all. I'm too late, then. Good day to yez," and she started for the door.

Mr. Hawkes stopped her.

"Where are you going?"

"Back to me father."

"Oh, nonsense."

"But I must go back to me father if me uncle's dead,"

"It was Mr. Kingsnorth's last wish that you should stay here under your aunt's care. So she has kindly consented to give you a home."

Peg gazed at Mrs. Chichester curiously.

"Have yez?" she asked.

Mrs. Chichester, with despair in every tone, replied: "I have!"

"Thank yez," said Peg, bobbing another little curtsey,

at which Mrs. Chichester covered her eyes with her hand as if to shut out some painful sight.

Peg looked at Mrs. Chichester and at the significant action. There was no mistaking its significance. It conveyed dislike and contempt so plainly that Peg felt it through her whole nature. She turned to Alaric and found him regarding her as though she were some strange animal. Ethel did not deign to notice her. And this was the family her father had sent her over to England to be put in amongst. She whispered to Hawkes:

"I can't stay here."

"Why not?" asked the lawyer.

"I'd be happier with me father," said Peg.

"Nonsense. You'll be quite happy here. Quite."

"They don't seem enthusiastic about us, do they?" and she looked down at "*Michael*" and up at Hawkes and indicated the Chichester family, who had by this time all turned their backs on her. She smiled a wan, lonely smile, and with a little pressure on "*Michael's*" back, murmured: "We're not wanted here, '*Michael!*"

The terrier looked up at her and then buried his head under her arm as though ashamed.

Jarvis came in response to the ring at that moment, bearing a pained, martyr-like expression on his face.

Mrs. Chichester directed him to take away Peg's parcels and the dog.

Peg frightenedly clutched the terrier.

"Oh, no, ma'am," she pleaded. "Plaze lave '*Michael*' with me. Don't take him away from me."

"Take it away," commanded Mrs. Chichester severely, "and never let it *inside* the house again."

"Well, if ye don't want *him* inside yer house ye don't want *me* inside yer house," Peg snapped back.

Hawkes interposed. "Oh, come, come, Miss O'Connell,

you can see the little dog whenever you want to," and he tried to take "*Michael*" out of her arms. "Come, let me have him."

But Peg resisted. She was positive when she said:

"No, I won't give him up. I won't. I had a hard enough time gettin' him ashore, I did."

Hawkes pleaded again.

"No!" said Peg firmly. "*I will not give him up.* And that's all there is about it."

The lawyer tried again to take the dog from her: "Come, Miss O'Connell, you really must be reasonable."

"I don't care about being reasonable," replied Peg. '*Michael*' was given to me by me father an' he's not very big and he's not a watchdog, he's a pet dog — and look ——" She caught sight of Ethel's little poodle and with a cry of self-justification, she said:

"See, she has a dog in the house — right here in the house. Look at it!" and she pointed to where the little ball of white wool lay sleeping on Ethel's lap. Then Peg laughed heartily: "I didn't know what it was until it *moved*."

Peg finally weakened under Mr. Hawkes' powers of persuasion and on the understanding that she could see him whenever she wanted to, permitted the lawyer to take "*Michael*" out of her arms and give him to the disgusted footman, who held him at arm's length in mingled fear and disgust.

Then Hawkes took the bag and the parcels and handed them also to Jarvis. One of them burst open, disclosing her father's parting gifts. She kept the rosary and the miniatures, and wrapping up the others carefully she placed them on the top of the other articles in the outraged Jarvis's arms, and then gave him her final injunc-

tions. Patting "Michael" on the head she said to the footman:

"Ye won't hurt him, will ye?" "*Michael*" at that stage licked her hand and whined as though he knew they were to be separated. Peg comforted him and went on: "And I'd be much obliged to ye if ye'd give him some wather and a bone. He loves mutton bones."

Jarvis, with as much dignity as he could assume, considering that he had one armful of shabby parcels and the other hand holding at arm's length a disgraceful looking mongrel, went out, almost on the verge of tears.

Peg looked down and found Alaric sitting at a desk near the door staring at her in disgust.

He was such a funny looking little fellow to Peg that she could not feel any resentment toward him. His sleek well-brushed hair; his carefully creased and admirably-cut clothes; his self-sufficiency; and above all his absolute assurance that whatever he did was right, amused Peg immensely. He was an entirely new type of young man to her and she was interested. She smiled at him now in a friendly way and said: "Ye must know '*Michael*' is simply crazy about mutton. He *loves* mutton."

Alaric turned indignantly away from her. Peg followed him up. He had begun to fascinate her. She looked at his baby-collar with a well-tied bow gleaming from the centre; at his pointed shoes; his curious, little, querulous look. He was going to be good fun for Peg. She wanted to begin at once. And she would have too, had no' the icy accents of Mrs. Chichester interrupted Peg's plans for the moment.

"Come here," called Mrs. Chichester.

Peg walked over to her and when she got almost beside the old lady she turned to have another glimpse at

Alaric and gave him a little, chuckling, good-natured laugh.

"Look at *me!*" commanded Mrs. Chichester sternly.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Peg, with a little curtsey. Mrs. Chichester closed her eyes for a moment. What was to be done with this barbarian? Why should this affliction be thrust upon her? Then she thought of the thousand pounds a year. She opened her eyes and looked severely at Peg.

"Don't call me '*ma'am*'!" she said.

"No, ma'am," replied Peg nervously, then instantly corrected herself: "No, *ant!* No, *ant!*"

"*Aunt!*" said Mrs. Chichester haughtily. "*Aunt.* Not *ant.*"

Alaric commented to Ethel:

"*Ant!* Like some little crawly insect."

Peg heard him, looked at him and laughed. He certainly was odd. Then she looked at Ethel, then at Mr. Hawkes, then all round the room as if she missed someone. Finally she faced Mrs. Chichester again.

"Are you me Uncle Nat's widdy?"

"No, I am not," contradicted the old lady sharply.

"Then how are you me — *aunt?*" demanded Peg.

"I am your mother's sister," replied Mrs. Chichester.

"Oh!" cried Peg. "Then your name's Monica?"

"It is."

"What do ye think of that?" said Peg under her breath. She surreptitiously opened out the miniature and looked at it, then she scrutinised her aunt. She shook her head.

"Ye don't look a bit like me poor mother did."

"What have you there?" asked Mrs. Chichester.

"Me poor mother's picture," replied Peg softly.

"Let me see it!" and Mrs. Chichester held out her

hand for it. Peg showed it to Mrs. Chichester, all the while keeping a jealous hold on a corner of the frame. No one would ever take it away from her. The old lady looked at it intently. Finally she said:

"She had changed very much since I last saw her — and in one year."

"Sorrow and poverty did that, Aunt Monica," and the tears sprang unbidden into Peg's eyes.

"*Aunt* will be quite sufficient. Put it away," and Mrs. Chichester released the miniature.

Peg hid it immediately in her bosom.

"Sit down," directed the old lady in the manner of a judge preparing to condemn a felon.

Peg sprawled into a chair with a great sigh of relief.

"Thank ye, ant — *aunt*," she said. Then she looked at them all alternately and laughed heartily:

"Sure I had no idea in the wurrld I had such fine relations. Although of course my father often said to me, 'Now, Peg,' he would say, 'now, Peg, ye've got some grand folks on yer mother's side'—"

"Folks! Really — Ethel!" cried Alaric disgustedly.

"Yes, that's what he said. Grand *folks* on me mother's side."

Mrs. Chichester silenced Peg.

"That will do. Don't sprawl in that way. Sit up. Try and remember where you are. Look at your cousin," and the mother indicated Ethel. Peg sat up demurely and looked at Ethel. She chuckled to herself as she turned back to Mrs. Chichester:

"Is she me cousin?"

"She is," replied the mother.

"And *I* am too," said Alaric. "Cousin Alaric."

Peg looked him all over and laughed openly. Then she turned to Ethel again, and then looked all around the

room and appeared quite puzzled. Finally she asked Mrs. Chichester the following amazing question:

"Where's her husband?"

Ethel sprang to her feet. The blow was going to fall. She was to be disgraced before her family by that beggar-brat. It was unbearable.

Mrs. Chichester said in astonishment: "Her *husband?*"

"Yes," replied Peg insistently. "I saw her husband when I came in here first. I've been in this room before, ye know. I came in through those windows and I saw her and her husband, she was —"

"What in heaven's name does she mean?" cried Alaric.

Peg persisted: "I tell ye it was *she* sent me to the kitchen — she and *him.*"

"Him? Who in the world does she mean?" from Alaric.

"To whom does she refer, Ethel?" from Mrs. Chichester.

"Mr. Brent," said Ethel with admirable self-control. She was on thin ice, but she must keep calm. Nothing may come out yet if only she can silence that little chatterbox.

Alaric burst out laughing.

Mrs. Chichester looked relieved.

Peg went on:

"Sure, she thought I was a servant looking for a place and Mr. Hawkes told me not to say a word until he came — and I didn't say a word —"

Mr. Hawkes now broke in and glancing at his watch said:

"My time is short. Miss O'Connell, it was your uncle's wish that you should make your home here with

"Sure *that* thing could never be President of the United States"

Mrs. Chichester. She will give you every possible advantage to make you a happy, well-cared for, charming young lady."

Peg laughed.

"*Lady? Me?* Sure now —"

The lawyer went on:

"You must do everything she tells you. Try and please her in all things. On the first day of every month I will call and find out what progress you're making."

He handed Mrs. Chichester a card:

"This is my business address should you wish to communicate with me. And now I must take my leave." He picked up his hat and cane from the table.

Peg sprang up breathlessly and frightenedly. Now that Mr. Hawkes was going she felt deserted. He had at least been gentle and considerate to her. She tugged at his sleeve and looked straight up into his face with her big blue eyes wide open and pleaded:

"Plaze, sir, take me with ye and send me back to New York. I'd rather go home. Indade I would. I don't want to be a lady. I want me father. Plaze take me with you."

"Oh — come — come —" Mr. Hawkes began.

"I want to go back to me father. Indade I do." Her eyes filled with tears. "He mightn't like me to stay here now that me uncle's dead."

"Why, it was your uncle's last wish that you should come here. Your father will be delighted at your good fortune." He gently pressed her back into the chair and smiled pleasantly and reassuringly down at her.

Just when he had negotiated everything most satisfactorily to have Peg endeavour to upset it all was most disturbing. He went on again:

"Your aunt will do everything in her power to make you feel at home. Won't you, Mrs. Chichester?"

"Everything!" said Mrs. Chichester, as if she were walking over her own grave.

Peg looked at her aunt ruefully: her expression was most forbidding: at Ethel's expressive back; lastly at Alaric fitting a cigarette into a gold-mounted holder. Her whole nature cried out against them. She made one last appeal to Mr. Hawkes:

"*Do* send me back to me father!"

"Nonsense, my dear Miss O'Connell. You would not disappoint your father in that way, would you? Wait for a month. I'll call on the first and I expect to hear only the most charming things about you. Now, good-bye," and he took her hand.

She looked wistfully up at him:

"Good-bye, sir. And thank ye very much for bein' so kind to me."

Hawkes bowed to Mrs. Chichester and Ethel and went to the door.

"Have a cab?" asked Alaric.

"No, thank you," replied the lawyer. "I have no luggage. Like the walk. Good-day," and Peg's only friend in England passed out and left her to face this terrible English family alone.

"Your name is Margaret," said Mrs. Chichester, as the door closed on Mr. Hawkes.

"No, ma'am —" Peg began, but immediately corrected herself; "no, aunt — I beg your pardon — no aunt — my name is Peg," cried she earnestly.

"That is only *a corruption*. We will call you Margaret," insisted Mrs. Chichester, dismissing the subject once and for all.

But Peg was not to be turned so lightly aside. She stuck to her point.

"I wouldn't know myself as Margaret — indade I wouldn't. I might forget to answer to the name of Margaret." She stopped her pleading tone and said determinedly: "My name *is* Peg." Then a little softer and more plaintively she added: "Me father always calls me Peg. It would put me in mind of me father if you'd let me be called Peg, aunt." She ended her plea with a little yearning cry.

"Kindly leave your father out of the conversation," snapped the old lady severely.

"Then it's all I will *lave* him out of!" cried Peg, springing up and confronting the stately lady of the house.

Mrs. Chichester regarded her in astonishment and anger.

"No *temper*, if you please," and she motioned Peg to resume her seat.

Poor Peg sat down, breathing hard, her fingers locking and unlocking, her staunch little heart aching for the one human being she was told not to refer to.

This house was not going to hold her a prisoner if her father's name was to be slighted or ignored; on that point she was determined. Back to America she would go if her father's name was ever insulted before her.

Mrs. Chichester's voice broke the silence:

"You must take my daughter as your model in all things."

Peg looked at Ethel and all her anger vanished temporarily. The idea of taking that young lady as a model appealed to her as being irresistibly amusing. She smiled broadly at Ethel.

Mrs. Chichester went on:

"Everything my daughter does you must try and imitate. You could not have a better example. Mould yourself on her."

"Imitate her, is it?" asked Peg innocently with a twinkle in her eye and the suggestion of impishness in her manner.

"So far as lies in your power," replied Mrs. Chichester.

A picture of Ethel struggling in Brent's arms suddenly flashed across Peg, and before she could restrain herself she had said in exact imitation of her cousin:

"Please don't! It is so hot this morning!"

Then Peg laughed loudly to Ethel's horror and Mrs. Chichester's disgust.

"How dare you!" cried her aunt.

Peg looked at her a moment, all the mirth died away.

"Mustn't I laugh in this house?" she asked.

"You have a great deal to learn."

"Yes, aunt."

"Your education will begin to-morrow."

"Sure that will be foine," and she chuckled.

"No levity, if you please," said her aunt severely.

"No, aunt."

"Until some decent clothes can be procured for you we will find some from my daughter's wardrobe."

"Sure I've a beautiful dhress in me satchel I go to Mass in on Sundays. It's all silk, and —"

Mrs. Chichester stopped her:

"That will do. Ring, Alaric, please."

As Alaric walked over to press the electric button he looked at Peg in absolute disgust and entire disapproval. Peg caught the look and watched him go slowly across the room. He had the same morbid fascination for her that some uncanny elfish creature might have. If only

her father could see him! She mentally decided to sketch Alaric and send it out to her father with a full description of him.

Mrs. Chichester again demanded her attention.

"You must try and realise that you have an opportunity few girls in your position are ever given. I only hope you will try and repay our interest and your late uncles wishes by obedience, good conduct and hard study."

"Yes, aunt," said Peg demurely. Then she added quickly: "I hope ye don't mind me not having worn me silk dress, but ye see I couldn't wear it on the steamer — it 'ud have got all wet. Ye have to wear yer thravellin' clothes when ye're thravellin'."

"That will do," said Mrs. Chichester sharply.

"Well, but I don't want ye to think me father doesn't buy me pretty clothes. He's very proud of me, an' I am of him — an'—"

"That will do," commanded Mrs. Chichester as Jarvis came in reply to the bell.

"Tell Bennett to show my niece to the Mauve Room and to attend her," said Mrs. Chichester to the footman. Then turning to Peg she dismissed her.

"Go with him."

"Yes, aunt," replied Peg. "An' I am goin' to thry and do everythin ye want me to. I will, indade I will."

Her little heart was craving for some show of kindness. If she was going to stay there she would make the best of it. She would make some friendly advances to them. She held her hand out to Mrs. Chichester:

"I'm sure I'm very grateful to you for taking me to live with yez here. An' me father will be too. But ye see it's all so strange to me here, an' I'm so far away — an' I miss me father so much."

Mrs. Chichester, ignoring the outstretched hand, stopped her peremptorily:

"Go with him!" and she pointed up the stairs, on the first landing of which stood the portly Jarvis waiting to conduct Peg out of the family's sight.

Peg dropped a little curtsey to Mrs. Chichester, smiled at Ethel, looked loftily at Alaric, then ran up the stairs and, following the footman's index finger pointing the way, she disappeared from Mrs. Chichester's unhappy gaze.

The three tortured people looked at each other in dismay.

"Awful!" said Alaric.

"Terrible!" agreed Mrs. Chichester.

"Dreadful!" nodded Ethel.

"It's our unlucky day, mater!" added Alaric.

"One thing is absolutely necessary," Mrs. Chichester went on to say, "she must be kept away from every one for the present."

"I should say so!" cried Alaric energetically. Suddenly he ejaculated: "Good Lord! Jerry! *He* mustn't see her. He'd laugh his head off at the idea of my having a relation like her. He'll probably run in to lunch."

"Then she must remain in her room until he's gone," said Mrs. Chichester, determinedly. "I'll go into town now and order some things for her and see about tutors. She must be taught and at once."

"Why put up with this annoyance at all?" asked Ethel, for the first time showing any real interest.

Mrs. Chichester put her arm around Ethel and a gentle look came into her eyes as she said:

"One thousand pounds a year — that is the reason — and rather than you or Alaric should have to make any

sacrifice, dear, or have any discomfort, I would put up with worse than that."

Ethel thought a moment before she replied reflectively:

"Yes, I suppose you would. I wouldn't," and she went up the stairs. When she was little more than half way up Alaric, who had been watching her nervously, called to her:

"Where are you off to, Ethel?"

She looked down at him and a glow, all unsuspected, came into her eyes and a line of colour ran through her cheeks, and there was an unusual tremor in her voice, as she replied:

"To try to make up my mind, if I can, about something. The coming of *Peg* may do it for me."

She went on out of sight.

Alaric was half-inclined to follow her. He knew she was taking their bad luck to heart withal she said so little. He was really quite fond of Ethel in a selfish, brotherly way. But for the moment he decided to let Ethel worry it out alone while he would go to the railway station and meet his friend's train. He called to his mother as she passed through the door:

"Wait a minute, mater, and I'll go with you as far as the station-road and see if I can head Jerry off. His train is almost due if it's punctual."

He was genuinely concerned that his old chum should not meet that impossible little red-headed Irish heathen whom an unkind fate had dropped down in their midst.

At the hall-door Mrs. Chichester told Jarvis that her niece was not to leave her room without permission.

As Mrs. Chichester and Alaric passed out they little dreamt that the same relentless fate was planning [illegible] further humiliations for the unfortunate family and through the new and unwelcome addition to it.

CHAPTER VI

JERRY

Peg was shown by the maid, Bennett, into a charming old-world room overlooking the rose garden. Everything about it was in the most exquisite taste. The furniture was of white and gold, the vases of Sèvres, a few admirable prints on the walls and roses everywhere.

Left to her reflections, poor Peg found herself wondering how people, with so much that was beautiful around them, could live and act as the Chichester family apparently did. They seemed to borrow nothing from their once illustrious and prosperous dead. They were, it would appear, only concerned with a particularly near present.

The splendour of the house awed — the narrowness of the people irritated her. What an unequal condition of things where such people were endowed with so much of the world's goods, while her father had to struggle all his life for the bare necessities!

She had heard her father say once that the only value money had, outside of one's immediate requirements, was to be able to relieve other people's misery: and that if we just spent it on ourselves money became a monster that stripped life of all happiness, all illusion, all love — and made it just a sefish mockery of a world!

How wonderfully true her father's diagnosis was!

Here was a family with everything to make them happy — yet none of them seemed to breathe a happy breath, think a happy thought, or know a happy hour.

The maid had placed Peg's scanty assortment of ar-

ticles on the dressing-table. They looked so sadly out of place amid the satin-lined boxes and perfumed drawers that Peg felt another momentary feeling of shame. Since her coming into the house she had experienced a series of awakenings. She sturdily overcame the feeling and changed her cheap little travelling suit for one of the silk dresses her father had bought her in New York. By the time she had arranged her hair with a big pink ribbon and put on the precious brown silk garment she began to feel more at ease. After all, who were they to intimidate her? If she did not like the house and the people, after giving them a fair trial, she would go back to New York. Very much comforted by the reflection and having exhausted all the curious things in the little Mauve-Room she determined to see the rest of the house.

At the top of the stairs she met the maid Bennett.

"Mrs. Chichester left word that you were not to leave your room without permission. I was just going to tell you," said Bennett.

All Peg's independent Irish blood flared up. What would she be doing shut up in a little white-and-gold room all day? She answered the maid excitedly:

"Tell Mrs. *Chi-ster* I am not goin' to do anythin' of the kind. As long as I stay in this house I'll see every bit of it!" and she swept past the maid down the stairs into the same room for the third time.

"You'll only get me into trouble," cried the maid.

"No, I won't. I wouldn't get you into trouble for the wurrld. I'll get all the trouble and I'll get it now." Peg ran across, opened the door connecting with the hall and called out at the top of her voice:

"Aunt! Cousins! Aunt! Come here, I want to tell ye about meself!"

"They've all gone out," said the maid quickly.

"Then what are ye makin' such a fuss about? You go out too."

She watched the disappointed Bennett leave the room and then began a tour of inspection. She had never seen so many strange things outside of a museum.

Fierce men in armour glared at her out of massive frames: old gentlemen in powdered wigs smiled pleasantly at her; haughty ladies in breath-bereaving coiffures stared superciliously right through her. She felt most uncomfortable in such strange company.

She turned from the gallery and entered the living room. Everything about it was of the solid Tudor days and bespoke, even as the portraits, a period when the family must have been of some considerable importance. She wandered about the room touching some things timidly — others boldly. For example — on the piano she found a perfectly carved bronze statuette of Cupid. She gave a little elfish cry of delight, took the statuette in her arms and kissed it.

"Cupid! me darlin'. Faith, it's you that causes all the mischief in the wurrld, ye divil ye!" she cried.

All her depression vanished. She was like a child again. She sat down at the piano and played the simple refrain and sang in her little girlish tremulous voice, one of her father's favourite songs, her eyes on Cupid:

"Oh! the days are gone when Beauty bright
My heart's charm wove!
When my dream of life, from morn till night,
Was love, still love!
New hope may bloom,
And days may come,
Of milder, calmer beam.

But there's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream!
No, there's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream."

As she let the last bars die away and gave Cupid a little caress, and was about to commence the next verse a vivid flash of lightning played around the room, followed almost immediately by a crash of thunder.

Peg cowered down into a deep chair.

All the laughter died from her face and the joy in her heart. She made the sign of the cross, knelt down and prayed to Our Lady of Sorrows.

By this time the sky was completely leaden in hue and the rain was pouring down.

Again the darkening room was lit up by a vivid forked flash and the crash of the thunder came instantly. The storm was immediately overhead. Peg closed her eyes, as she did when a child, while her lips moved in prayer.

Into the room through the window came a young man, his coat-collar turned up, rain pouring from his hat; inside his coat was a terrified-looking dog. The man came well into the room, turning down the collar of his coat; and shaking the moisture from his clothes, when he suddenly saw the kneeling figure of Peg. He looked down at her in surprise. She was intent on her prayers.

"Hello!" cried the young man. "Frightened, eh?"

Peg looked up and saw him staring down at her with a smile on his lips. Inside his coat was her precious little dog, trembling with fear. The terrier barked loudly when he saw his mistress. Peg sprang up, clutched "*Michael*" away from the stranger, just as another blinding flash played around the room followed by a deafening report.

Peg ran across to the door shouting: "Shut it out! Shut it out!" She stood there trembling, covering her eyes with one hand, with the other she held on to the overjoyed "*Michael*," who was whining with glee at seeing her again.

The amazed and amused young man closed the windows and the curtains. Then he moved down toward Peg.

"Don't come near the dog, sir. Don't come near it!" She opened a door and found it led into a little reception room. She fastened "*Michael*" with a piece of string to a chair in the room and came back to look again at the stranger, who had evidently rescued her dog from the storm. He was a tall, bronzed, athletic-looking, broad shouldered young man of about twenty-six, with a pleasant, genial, magnetic manner and a playful humour lurking in his eyes.

As Peg looked him all over she found that he was smiling down at her.

"Does the dog belong to you?" he queried.

"What were you doin' with him?" she asked in reply.

"I found him barking at a very high-spirited mare."

"*Mare?*" cried Peg. "*Where?*"

"Tied to the stable-door."

"The *stable*-door? Is that where they put '*Michael*'?" Once again the lightning flashed vividly and the thunder echoed dully through the room.

Peg shivered.

The stranger reassured her.

"Don't be frightened. It's only a summer storm."

"Summer or winter, they shrivel me up," gasped Peg.

The young man walked to the windows and drew back the curtains.

"Come and look at it," he said encouragingly. "They're beautiful in this part of the country. Come and watch it."

"I'll not watch it!" cried Peg. "Shut it out!"

Once more the young man closed the curtains.

Peg looked at him and said in an awe-struck voice:

"They say if ye look at the sky when the lightnin' comes ye can see the Kingdom of Heaven. An' the sight of it blinds some and kills others — accordin' to the state of grace ye're in.'

"You're a Catholic?" said the stranger.

"What else would I be?" asked Peg in surprise.

Again the lightning lit the room and, after some seconds, came the deep rolling of the now distant thunder.

Peg closed her eyes again and shivered.

"Doesn't it seem He is angry with us for our sins?" she cried.

"With *me*, perhaps — not with *you*," answered the stranger.

"What do ye mane by that?" asked Peg.

"You don't know what sin is," replied the young man.

"And who may you be to talk to me like that?" demanded Peg.

"My name is Jerry," said the stranger.

"*Jerry!*" and Peg looked at him curiously.

"Yes. What is yours?"

"Peg!" and there was a sullen note of fixed determination in her tone.

"Peg, eh?" and the stranger smiled.

She nodded and looked at him curiously. What a strange name he had — *Jerry!* She had never heard such a name before associated with such a distinguished-looking man. She asked him again slowly to make certain she had heard aright.

"*Jerry*, did ye say?"

"Just plain Jerry," he answered cheerfully. "And you're *Peg*."

She nodded again with a quick little smile: "Just plain Peg."

"I don't agree with you," said the young man. "I think you are very charming."

"Ye mustn't say things like that with the thundher and lightnin' outside," answered Peg, frowning.

"I mean it," from the man who called himself "*Jerry*."

"No, ye don't mane it," said Peg positively. "The man who *manes* them things never sez them. My father always told me to be careful of the fellow that sez flattherin' things right to yer face. 'He's no good, Peg,' my father sez; 'He's no good.'"

Jerry laughed heartily.

"Your father is right, only his doctrine hardly applies in this instance. I didn't mean it as flattery. Just a plain statement of fact."

After a pause he went on: "Who are you?"

"I'm me aunt's niece," replied Peg, looking at him furtively.

Jerry laughed again.

"And who is your aunt?"

"Mrs. Chi-ster."

"Whom?"

Poor Peg tried again at the absurd tongue-tying name.

"My aunt is Mrs. *Chi-sister*."

"Mrs. *Chichester?*" asked Jerry in surprise.

"That's it," said Peg.

"How extraordinary!"

"Isn't it? Ye wouldn't expect a fine lady like her to have a niece like me, would ye?"

"That isn't what I meant," corrected Jerry.

"Yes, it is what ye meant. Don't tell untruths with the storm ragin' outside," replied Peg.

"I was thinking that I don't remember Alaric ever telling me that he had such a charming cousin."

"Oh, do you know Alaric?" asked Peg with a quick smile.

"Very well," answered Jerry.

Peg's smile developed into a long laugh.

"And why that laugh?" queried Jerry.

"I'd like me father to see Alaric. I'd like him just to see Alaric for one minnit."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indade. Ye know *Alaric*, do ye? — isn't it funny how the name suits him? — *Alaric!* there are very few people a name like that would get along with — but it fits *him* all right — doesn't it? Well, he didn't know I was alive until I dropped down from the clouds this mornin'."

"Where did you drop from?"

"New York."

"Really? How odd."

"Not at all. It's nearly as big as London and there's nothin' odd about New York."

"Were you born there?" asked Jerry.

"I was," answered Peg.

"By way of old Ireland, eh?"

"How did ye guess that?" queried Peg, not quite certain whether to be pleased or angry.

"Your slight — but *delightful* accent," replied Jerry.

"*Accent* is it?" and Peg looked at him in astonishment. "Sure *I've* no accent. I just speak naturally. It's *you* have the accent to my way of thinkin'."

"Really?" asked the amused Jerry.

Peg imitated the young man's well-bred, polished tone: "Wah ye bawn theah?"

Jerry laughed immoderately. Who was this extraordinary little person? was the one thought that was in his mind.

"How would you say it?" he asked.

"I'd say it naturally. I would say: 'Were ye borrn there?' I wouldn't twist the poor English language any worse than it already is."

Peg had enough of the discussion and started off on another expedition of discovery by standing on a chair and examining some china in a cabinet.

Jerry turned up to the windows and drew back the curtains, threw the windows wide open and looked up at the sky. It was once more a crystal blue and the sun was shining vividly.

He called to Peg: "The storm is over. The air is clear of electricity. All the anger has gone from the heavens. See?"

Peg said reverently: "Praise be to God for that."

Then she went haphazardly around the room examining everything, sitting in various kinds of chairs, on the sofa, smelling the flowers and wherever she went Jerry followed her, at a little distance.

"Are you going to stay here?" he reopened the conversation with.

"Mebbe I will and mebbe I won't," was Peg's somewhat unsatisfactory answer.

"Did your aunt send for you?"

"No — me uncle."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indade; me Uncle Nat."

"*Nat?*"

"Nathaniel Kingsnorth — rest his soul."

"Nathaniel Kingsnorth!" cried Jerry in amazement. Peg nodded.

"Sleepin' in his grave, poor man."

"Why, then you're Miss Margaret O'Connell?"

"I am. How did ye know *that?*"

"I was with your uncle when he died."

"*Were* ye?"

"He told me all about you."

"Did he? Well, I wish the poor man 'ud ha' lived. An' I wish he'd a' thought o' us sooner. He with all his money an' me father with none, an' me his sister's only child."

"What does your father do?"

Peg took a deep breath and answered eagerly. She was on the one subject about which she could talk freely — all she needed was a good listener. This strange man, unlike her aunt, seemed to be the very person to talk to on the one really vital subject to Peg. She said breathlessly:

"Sure me father can do anythin' at all — except make money. An' when he *does* make it he can't kape it. He doesn't like it enough. Nayther do I. We've never had very much to like, but we've seen others around us with plenty an' faith we've been the happiest — that we have."

She only stopped to take breath before on she went again:

"There have been times when we've been most starvin', but me father never lost his pluck or his spirits. Nayther did I. When times have been the hardest I've never heard a word of complaint from me father, nor seen a frown on his face. An' he's never used a harsh word to

me in me life. Sure we're more like boy and girl together than father and daughther." Her eyes began to fill and her voice to break:

"An' I'm sick for the sight of him. An' I'm sure he is for me — for his 'Peg o' my Heart,' as he always calls me."

She covered her eyes as the tears trickled down through her fingers. Under her breath Jerry heard her saying:

"I wish I was back home — so I do."

He was all compassion in a moment. Something in the loneliness and staunchness of the little girl appealed to him.

"Don't do that," he said softly, as he felt the moisture start into his own eyes.

Peg unpinned her little handkerchief and carefully wiped away her tears and just as carefully folded the handkerchief up again and pinned it back by her side.

"I don't cry often," she said. "Me father never made me do it. I never saw *him* cry but twice in his life — once when he made a little money and we had a Mass said for me mother's soul, an' we had the most beautiful candles on Our Lady's altar. He cried then, he did. And when I left him to come here on the ship. And then only at the last minnit. He laughed and joked with me all the time we were together — but when the ship swung away from the dock he just broke down and cried like a little child. 'My Peg!' he kep' sayin': 'My Little Peg!' I tell ye I wanted to jump off that ship an' go back to him — but we'd started — an' I don't know how to swim."

How it relieved her pent-up feelings to talk to some one about her father! Already she felt she had known Jerry for years. In a moment she went on again:

"I cried meself to sleep *that* night, I did. An' many a night, too, on that steamer.

"I didn't want to come here — that I didn't. I only did it to please me father. He thought it 'ud be for me good.

"An' I wish I hadn't come — that I do. He's missin' me every minnit — an' I'm missin' him. An' I'm not goin' to be happy here, ayther.

"I don't want to be a lady. An' they won't make me one ayther if I can help it. 'Ye can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear,' that's what me father always said. An' that's what I am. I'm a sow's ear."

She stopped,— her eyes fixed on the ground.

Jerry was more than moved at this entirely human and natural outbreak. It was even as looking into some one's heart and brain and hearing thoughts spoken aloud and seeing the nervous workings of the heart. When she described herself in such derogatory terms, a smile of relief played on Jerry's face as he leaned over to her and said:

"I'm afraid I cannot agree with you."

She looked up at him and said indifferently: "It doesn't make the slightest bit of difference to me whether ye do or not. That's what I am. I'm a sow's ear."

He reasoned with her:

"When the strangeness wears off you'll be very happy."

"Do yez know the people here — the Chilsters?"

"Oh, yes. Very well."

"Then what makes ye think I'll be happy among them?"

"Because you'll know that you're pleasing your father."

"But I'm all alone."

"You're among friends."

Peg shook her head and said bitterly: "No, I'm not. They may be me *relations*, but they're not me *friends*. They're ashamed of me."

"Oh, no!" interrupted Jerry.

"Oh, yes," contradicted Peg. "I tell ye they *are* ashamed of me. They sent me to the kitchen when I first came here. And now they put '*Michael*' to slape in the stable. I want ye to understand '*Michael*' is not used to that. He always sleeps with me father."

She was so unexpected that Jerry found himself on the verge of tears one moment, and the next something she would say, some odd look or quaint inflection would compel his laughter again. He had a mental picture of "*Michael*," the pet of Peg's home, submitting to the indignity of companionship with mere horses. Small wonder he was snapping at Ethel's mare, when Jerry discovered him.

He turned again to Peg and said:

"When they really get to know you, Miss O'Connell, they will be just as proud of you as your father is — as — I would be."

Peg looked at him in whimsical astonishment: "*You'd* be? Why should *you* be proud of *me?*"

"I'd be more than proud if you'd look on me as your friend."

"A *friend* to it?" cried Peg warily. "Sure I don't know who you are at all," and she drew away from him. She was on her guard. Peg made few friends. Friendship to her was not a thing to be lightly given or accepted. Why, this man, calling himself by the outlandish name of "Jerry," should walk in out of nowhere, and offer her his friendship, and expect her to jump at it, puzzled her. It also irritated her. Who *was* he?

Jerry explained:

"Oh, I can give you some very good references. For instance, I went to the same college as your cousin Alaric."

Peg looked at him in absolute disdain.

"*Did* ye?" she said. "Well, I'd mention that to very few people if I were you," and she walked away from him. He followed her.

"Don't you want me to be your friend?"

"Sure I don't know," Peg answered quickly. "I'm like the widdy's pig that was put into a rale bed to sleep. It nayther wanted it, nor it didn't want it. The pig had done without beds all its life, and it wasn't cryin' its heart out for the loss of somethin' it had never had and couldn't miss."

Jerry laughed heartily at the evident sincerity of the analogy.

Peg looked straight at him: "I want to tell ye that's one thing that's in yer favour," she said.

"What is?" asked Jerry.

"Sure, laughter is not dead in you, as it is in every one else in this house."

Whilst Jerry was still laughing, Peg suddenly joined in with him and giving him a playful slap with the back of her hand, asked him:

"Who are ye at all?"

"No one in particular," answered Jerry between gasps.

"I can see that," said Peg candidly. "I mean what do ye do?"

"Everything a little and nothing really well," Jerry replied. "I was a soldier for a while: then I took a splash at doctoring: read law: civil-engineered in South America for a year: now I'm farming."

"Farming?" asked Peg incredulously.

"Yes. I'm a farmer."

Peg laughed as she looked at the well-cut clothes, the languid manner and easy poise.

"It must be mighty hard on the land and cattle to have *you* farmin' them," she said.

"It is," and he too laughed again. "They resent my methods. I'm a new farmer."

"Faith ye must be."

"To sum up my career I can do a whole lot of things fairly well and none of them well enough to brag about."

"Just like me father," she said interestedly.

"You flatter me," he replied courteously.

Peg thought she detected a note of sarcasm. She turned on him fiercely:

"I know I do. There isn't a man in the whole wurrld like me father. Not a man in the wurrld. But he says he's a rollin' stone and they don't amount to much in a hard-hearted wurrld that's all for makin' dollars."

"Your father is right," agreed Jerry. "Money is the standard to-day and we're all valued by it."

"And he's got none," cried Peg. Thoughts were coming thick and fast through her little brain. To speak of her father was to want to be near him. And she wanted him there now for that polished, well-bred gentleman to see what a wonderful man he was. She suddenly said:

"Well, he's got me. I've had enough of this place. I'm goin' home now." She started up the staircase leading to the Mauve Room.

Jerry called after her anxiously:

"No, no! Miss O'Connell. Don't go like that."

"I must," said Peg from the top of the stairs. "What will I get here but to be laughed at and jeered at by a lot of people that are not fit to even look at me

father. Who are they I'd like to know that I mustn't speak his name in their presence? I love me father and sure it's easier to suffer for the want of food than the want of love!"

Suddenly she raised one hand above her head and in the manner and tone of a public-speaker she astounded Jerry with the following outburst:

"An' that's what the Irish are doin' all over the wurrld. They're driven out of their own country by the English and become wandherers on the face of the earth and nothin' they ever *earn'll* make up to them for the separation from their homes and their loved ones!" She finished the peroration on a high note and with a forced manner such as she had frequently heard on the platform.

She smiled at the astonished Jerry and asked him:

"Do ye know what that is?"

"I haven't the least idea," he answered truthfully.

"That's out of one of me father's speeches. Me father makes grand speeches. He makes them in the Cause of Ireland."

"Oh, really! In the Cause of Ireland, eh?" said Jerry.

"Yes. He's been strugglin' all his life to make Ireland free — to get her Home Rule, ye know. But the English are so ignorant. They think they know more than me father. If they'd do what me father tells them sure there'd be no more throuble in Ireland at all."

"Really?" said Jerry, quite interestedly.

"Not a bit of throuble. I wish me father was here to explain it to ye. He could tell ye the whole thing in a couple of hours. I wish he were here now just to give you an example of what fine speakin' really is. Do you like speeches?"

"Very much — sometimes," replied Jerry, guardedly.

"Me father is wondherful on a platform with a lot o' people in front of him. He's wondherful. I've seen him take two or three hundred people who didn't know they had a grievance in the wurrld — the poor cratures — they were just contented to go on bein' ground down and trampled on and they not knowing a thing about it — I've seen me father take that crowd and in five minutes afther he had started spakin' to them ye wouldn't know they were the same people. They were all shoutin' at once, and they had murther in their eye and it was blood they were afther. They wanted to reform somethin'— they weren't sure what — but they wanted to do it — an' at the cost of life. Me father could have led them anywhere. It's a wondherful *power* he was. And magnetism. He just looks at the wake wuns an' they wilt. He turns to the brave wuns and they're ready to face cannon-balls for him. He's a born leader — that's what he is, a born leader!" She warmed to her subject: she was on her hobby-horse and she would ride it as far as this quiet stranger would let her. She went on again:

"Ye know the English government are very much frightened of me father. They are indade. They put him in prison once — before I was born. They were so afraid of him they put him in prison. I wish ye could see him!" she said regretfully.

"I am sure I wish I could — with all my heart. You have really aroused my keenest interest," said Jerry, gravely. "He must be a very remarkable man," he added.

"That's what he is," agreed Peg warmly. "An' a very wondherful lookin' man, too. He's a big, upstandin' man, with gold hair goin' grey, an' a flashin' eye an' a great magnetic voice. Everybody sez 't's the *magnetism*

in him that makes him so dangerous. An' he's as bold as a lion. He isn't frightened of anybody. He'll say anything right to your face. Oh, I wish ye could just meet him. He's not afraid to make any kind of a speech — whether it's right or not, so long as it's for the 'Cause.' Do yez like hearin' about me father?" she asked Jerry suddenly, in case she was tiring him — although how any one *could* be tired listening to the description of her Hero she could not imagine.

Jerry hastened to assure her that he was really most interested.

"I am not botherin' ye listenin', am I?"

"Not in the least," Jerry assured her again.

"Well, so long as yer not tired I'll tell ye some more. Ye know I went all through Ireland when I was a child with me father in a cart. An' the police and the constabulary used to follow us about. They were very frightened of me father, they were. They were grand days for me. Ye know he used to thry his speeches on me first. Then I'd listen to him make them in public. I used to learn them when I'd heard them often enough. I know about fifty. I'll tell ye some of them if I ever see ye again. Would ye like to hear some of them?"

"Very much indeed," answered Jerry.

"Well, if I *stay* here ye must come some time an' I'll tell ye them. But it is not the same hearin' me that it is hearin' me father. Ye've got to see the flash of his eye an' hear the big sob in his voice, when he spakes of his counthry, to rale'y get the full power o' them. I'll do me best for ye, of course.

"Ye're English, mebbe?" she asked him suddenly.

"I am," said Jerry. He almost felt inclined to apologise.

"Well, sure that's not your fault. Ye couldn't help

it. No one should hold that against ye. We can't all be born Irish."

"I'm glad you look at it so broad-mindedly," said Jerry.

"Do ye know much about Ireland?" asked Peg.

"Very little, I'm ashamed to say," answered Jerry.

"Well, it would be worth yer while to learn somethin' about it," said Peg.

"I'll make it my business to," he assured her.

"It's God country, is Ireland. And it's many a tear He must have shed at the way England mismanages it. But He is very lenient and patient with the English. They're so slow to take notice of how things really are. And some day He will punish them and it will be through the Irish that punishment will be meted out to them." She had unconsciously dropped again into her father's method of oratory, climaxing the speech with all the vigour of the rising inflection. She looked at Jerry, her face aglow with enthusiasm.

"That's from another of me father's speeches. Did ye notice the way he ended it? —' through the Irish that punishment will be *meted out* to them!' I think '*meted out*' is grand. I tell you me father has the most wondherful command of language."

She stood restlessly a moment, her hands beating each other alternately.

"I get so lonesome for him," she said.

Suddenly with a tone of definite resolve in her voice she started up the stairs, calling over her shoulder:

"I'm goin' back to him *now*. Good-bye!" and she ran all the way upstairs.

Jerry followed her — pleading insistently:

"Wait! Please wait!"

She stopped at the top of the stairs and looked down at him:

"Give us one month's trial — one month!" he urged. "It will be very little out of your life and I promise you your father will not suffer through it except in losing you for that one little month. Will you? Just a month?"

He spoke so earnestly and seemed so sincerely pained and so really concerned at her going, that she came down a few steps and looked at him irresolutely:

"Why do you want me to stay?" she asked him.

"Because — because your late uncle was my friend. It was his last wish to do something for you. Will you? Just a month?"

She struggled with the desire to go away from all that was so foreign and distasteful to her. Then she looked at Jerry and realised, with something akin to a feeling of pleasure, that he was pleading with her to stay, and doing it in such a way as to suggest that it mattered to him. She had to admit to herself that she rather liked the look of him. He seemed honest, and even though he were English he *did* show an interest whenever she spoke of her father and he *had* promised to try and learn something about Ireland. That certainly was in his favour — just as the fact that he could laugh was, too.

Quickly the thoughts ran hot-foot through Peg's brain: After all to run away now would look cowardly. Her father would be ashamed of her. This stuck up family would laugh at her. That thought was too much. The very suggestion of Alaric laughing at her caused a sudden rush of blood to her head. Her temples throbbed. Instantly she made up her mind.

She would stay. Turning to Jerry, she said:

"All right, then. I'll stay — a month. But not any more than a month, though!"

"Not unless you wish it."

"I won't wish it — I promise ye that. One month'll be enough in this house. It's goin' to seem like a life-time."

"I'm glad," said Jerry, smiling.

"Ye're glad it's goin' to seem like a life-time?"

"No, no!" he corrected her hastily; "I am glad you're going to stay."

"Well, that's a comfort anyway. Some one'll be pleased at me stayin'." And she came down the stairs and walked over to the piano again.

Jerry followed her:

"I am — immensely."

"All right. Ye've said it!" replied Peg, looking up and finding him standing beside her. She moved away from him. Again he followed her:

"And will you look on me as your friend?"

This time she turned away abruptly. She did not like being followed about by a man she had only just met.

"There's time enough for that," she said, and went across to the windows.

"Is it so hard?" pleaded Jerry, again following her.

"I don't know whether it's hard or aisy until I thry it."

"Then try," urged Jerry, going quite close to her.

She faced him: "I never had anyone makin' such a fuss about havin' me for a friend before. I don't understand you at all."

"Yet I'm very simple," said Jerry.

"I don't doubt ye," Peg answered drily. "From what I've heard of them most of the English are — simple."

He laughed and held out his hand.

"What's that for?" she asked suspiciously.

"To our friendship."

"I never saw the likes of you in all me life."

"Come — Peg."

"I don't think it's necessary."

"Come!"

She looked into his eyes: They were fixed upon her. Without quite knowing why she found herself giving him her hand.

He grasped it firmly.

"Friends, Peg?"

"Not yet now," she answered half defiantly, half frightenedly.

"I'll wager we will be."

"Don't put much on it, ye might lose."

"I'll stake my life on it."

"Ye don't value it much, then."

"More than I did. May you be very happy amongst us, Peg."

A door slammed loudly in the distance. Peg distinctly heard her aunt's voice and Alaric's. In a moment she became panic-stricken. She made one bound for the stairs and sprang up them three at a time. At the top she turned and warned him:

"Don't tell any one ye saw me."

"I won't," promised the astonished young man.

But their secret was to be short-lived.

As Peg turned, Ethel appeared at the top of the stairs and as she descended, glaring at Peg, the unfortunate girl went down backwards before her. At the same moment Mrs. Chichester and Alaric came in through the door.

They all greeted Jerry warmly.

Mrs. Chichester was particularly gracious.

"So sorry we were out. You will stay to lunch?"

"It is what I came for," replied Jerry heartily. He slipped his arm through Alaric's and led him up to the windows:

"Why, Al, your cousin is adorable!" he said enthusiastically.

"What?" Alaric gasped in horror. "You've met her?"

"Indeed I have. And we had the most delightful time together. I want to see a great deal of her while she's here."

"You're joking?" remarked Alaric cautiously.

"Not at all. She has the frank honest grip on life that I like better than anything in mankind or womankind. She has made me a convert to Home Rule already."

The luncheon-gong sounded in the distance. Alaric hurried to the door:

"Come along, every one! Lunch!"

"Thank goodness," cried Jerry, joining him. "I'm starving."

Peg came quietly from behind the newell post, where she had been practically hidden, and went straight to Jerry and smiling up at him, her eyes dancing with amusement, said:

"So am I starvin' too. I've not had a bite since six."

"Allow me," and Jerry offered her his arm.

Mrs. Chichester quickly interposed.

"My niece is tired after her journey. She will lunch in her room."

"Oh, but I'm not a bit tired," ejaculated Peg anxiously. "I'm not tired at all, and I'd much rather have lunch down here with Mr. Jerry."

The whole family were aghast.

Ethel looked indignantly at Peg.

Mrs. Chichester ejaculated: "What?"

Alaric, almost struck dumb, fell back upon: "Well, I mean to say!"

"And you *shall* go in with Mr. Jerry," said that young gentleman, slipping Peg's arm through his own. Turning to Mrs. Chichester he asked her: "With your permission we will lead the way. Come — Peg," and he led her to the door and opened it.

Peg looked up at him, a roguish light dancing in her big expressive eyes.

"Thanks. I'm not so sure about that wager of yours. I think yer life *is* safe. I want to tell ye ye've saved mine." She put one hand gently on her little stomach and cried: "I am so hungry me soul is hangin' by a thread."

Laughing gaily, the two new-found friends went in search of the dining-room.

The Chichester family looked at each other.

It seemed that the fatal first day of June was to be a day of shocks.

"Disgraceful!" ventured Ethel.

"Awful!" said the stunned Alaric.

"She must be taken in hand and at once!" came in firm tones from Mrs. Chichester. "She must never be left alone again. Come quickly before she can disgrace us any further to-day."

The unfortunate family, following in the wake of Peg and Jerry, found them in the dining-room chattering together like old friends. He was endeavouring to persuade Peg to try an olive. She yielded just as the family arrived. She withdrew the olive in great haste and turning to Jerry said:

"Faith, there's nothin' good about it but it's colour!" In a few moments she sat down to the first formal meal in the bosom of the Chichester family.

CHAPTER VII

THE PASSING OF THE FIRST MONTH

The days that followed were never-to-be-forgotten ones for Peg. Her nature was in continual revolt. The teaching of her whole lifetime she was told to correct. Everything she *said*, everything she *looked*, everything she *did* was wrong.

Tutors were engaged to prepare her for the position she might one day enjoy through her dead uncle's will. They did not remain long. She showed either marked incapacity to acquire the slightest veneer of culture — else it was pure wilfulness.

The only gleams of relief she had were on the occasions when Jerry visited the family. Whenever they could avoid Mrs. Chichester's watchful eyes they would chat and laugh and play like children. She could not understand him — he was always discovering new traits in her. They became great friends.

Her letters to her father were, at first, very bitter, regarding her treatment by the family. Indeed so resentful did they become that her father wrote to her in reply urging her, if she was so unhappy, to at once return to him on the next steamer. But she did *not*. Little by little the letters softened. Occasionally, toward the end of that first month they seemed almost contented. Her father marvelled at the cause.

The month she had promised to stay was drawing to an end. But one more day remained. It was to be a memorable one for Peg.

Jerry had endeavoured at various times to encourage

her to study. He would question her, and chide her and try to stimulate her. One day he gave her a large, handsomely-bound volume and asked her to read it at odd times and he would examine her in it when she had mastered its contents. She opened it wonderingly and found it to be "Love Stories of the World."

It became Peg's treasure. She kept it hidden from every one in the house. She made a cover for it out of a piece of cloth so that no one could see the ornate binding. She would read it at night in her room, by day out in the fields or by the sea. But her favourite time and place was in the living-room, every evening after dinner. She would surround herself with books — a geography, a history of England, a huge atlas, a treatise on simple arithmetic and put the great book in the centre,— making of it an island — the fount of knowledge. Then she would devour it intently until some one disturbed her. The moment she heard anyone coming she would cover it up quickly with the other books and pretend to be studying.

The book was a revelation to her. It gave all her imagination full play. Through its pages treaded a stately procession of Kings and Queens — Wagnerian heroes and heroines: Shakespearian creations, melodious in verse; and countless others. It was indeed a treasure-house. It took her back to the lives and loves of the illustrious and passionate dead, and it brought her for the first time to the great fount of poetry and genius.

Life began to take on a different aspect to her.

All her rebellious spirit would soften under the spell of her imagination; and again all her dauntless spirit would assert itself under the petty humiliations the Chichester family frequently inflicted upon her.

Next to Mrs. Chichester she saw Alaric the most.

Although she could not actively dislike the little man her first feeling of amusement wore off. He simply bored her now. He was no longer funny. He seemed of so little account in the world.

She saw but little of Ethel. They hardly spoke when they met.

All through the month Christian Brent was a frequent visitor.

If Peg only *despised* the Chichesters she positively *loathed* Brent, and with a loathing she took no pains to conceal.

On his part, Brent would openly and covertly show his admiration for her. Peg was waiting for a really good chance to find out Mr. Brent's real character. The opportunity came.

On the night of the last day of the trial-month, Peg was in her favourite position, lying face downward on a sofa, reading her treasure, when she became conscious of some one being in the room watching her. She started up in a panic instinctively hiding the book behind her. She found Brent staring down at her in open admiration. Something in the intentness of his gaze caused her to spring to her feet. He smiled a sickly smile.

"The book must be absorbing. What is it?" he asked.

Peg faced him, the book clasped in both of her hands behind her back; her eyes flashing and her heart throbbing. Brent looked at her with marked appreciation:

"You mustn't be angry, child. What is it? Eh? Something *forbidden?*" and he leered knowingly at her. Then he made a quick snatch at the book, saying:

"Show it me!"

Peg ran across the room and turning up a corner of the carpet, put the book under it, turned back the car-

pet, put her foot determinedly on it and turned again to face her tormentor.

Brent went rapidly across to her. The instinct of the chase was quick in his blood.

"A hiding-place, eh? *Now* you make me really curious. Let me see." He again made a movement toward the hidden book.

Peg clenched both of her hands into little fists and glared at Brent, while her breath came in quick, sharp gasps. She was prepared to defend the identity of the book at any cost.

"I love spirit!" cried Brent.

Then he looked at her charming dress; at her stylish coiffure; at the simple spray of flowers at her breast. He gave an ejaculation of pleasure.

"What a wonderful change in a month. You most certainly would *not* be sent to the kitchen *now*. Do you know you have grown into a most attractive young lady? You are really delightful angry. And you *are* angry, aren't you? And with me, eh? I'm so sorry if I've offended you. Let us kiss and be friends." He made an impulsive movement toward her and tried to take her in his arms. Peg gave him a resounding box on the ear. With a muffled ejaculation of anger and of pain he attempted to seize her by the wrists, when the door opened and Ethel came into the room.

Peg, panting with fury, glared at them both for a moment and then hurried out through the windows.

Brent, gaining complete control of himself, turned to Ethel and, advancing with outstretched hands, murmured:

"My dear!"

Ethel looked coldly at him, ignored the extended hands and asked:

"Why did she run away?"

Brent smiled easily and confidently:

"I'd surprised one of her secrets and she flew into a temper. Did you see her strike me?" He waited anxiously for her reply.

"*Secrets?*" was all Ethel said.

"Yes. See." He walked across to the corner and turned back the carpet and kneeling down searched for the book, found it and held it up triumphantly: "Here!" He stood up, and opened the book and read the title-page:

"'*Love Stories of the World.*' 'To Peg from Jerry.' Oho!" cried Mr. Brent. "Jerry! Eh? No wonder she didn't want me to see it."

He put the book back into its hiding-place and advanced to Ethel:

"Jerry! So *that's* how the land lies. Romantic little child!"

Ethel looked steadily at him as he came toward her. Something in her look stopped him within a few feet of her.

"Why don't you go after her?" and she nodded in the direction Peg had gone.

"Ethel!" he cried, aghast.

"She is *new* and has all the *virtues.*"

"I assure you —" he began —

"You needn't. If there is one thing I am convinced of, it's your *assurance.*"

"Really — Ethel —"

"Were you 'carried away' again?" she sneered.

"Do you think for one moment —?" he stopped.

"Yes, I do," answered Ethel positively.

Brent hunted through his mind for an explanation. Finally he said helplessly:

"I — I — don't know what to say."

"Then you'd better say nothing."

"Surely you're not jealous — of a — a — child?"

"No. I don't think it's *jealousy*," said Ethel slowly.

"Then what is it?" he asked eagerly.

She looked scornfully at him:

"Disgust!" She shrugged her shoulders contemptuously as he tried in vain to find something to say. Then she went on:

"Now I understand why the *scullery* is sometimes the rival of the *drawing-room*. The love of change!"

He turned away from her. He was hurt. Cut to the quick.

"This is not worthy of you!" was all he said.

"That is what rankles," replied Ethel. "It isn't. *You're* not."

"Ethel!" he cried desperately.

"If that ever happened again I should have to *amputate you*."

Brent walked over to the window-seat where he had left his automobile coat and cap and picked them up.

Ethel watched him quietly.

"Chris! Come here!"

He turned to her.

"There! It's over! I suppose I *have* been a little hard on you. All forgotten?" She held out her hand. He bent over it.

"My nerves have been rather severely tried this past month," Ethel went on. "Put a mongrel into a kennel of thoroughbreds, and they will either destroy the intruder or be in a continual condition of unsettled, irritated intolerance. That is exactly *my* condition. I'm unsettled, irritable and intolerant."

Brent sat beside her and said softly:

"Then I've come in time?"

Ethel smiled as she looked right through him:

"So did I, didn't I?" and she indicated the window through which Peg ran after assaulting Brent.

The young man sprang up reproachfully:

"Don't! Please don't!" he pleaded.

"Very well," replied Ethel complacently, "I won't."

Brent was standing, head down, his manner was crest-fallen. He looked the realisation of misery and self-pity.

"I'm sorry, Chris," remarked Ethel finally, after some moments had passed. "A month ago it wouldn't have mattered so much. Just now — it *does*. I'd rather looked forward to seeing you. It's been horrible here."

"A month of misery for me, too," replied Brent, passionately.

"I'm going away — out of it. To-morrow!" he added.

"Are you?" she asked languidly. "Where?"

"Petersburg — Moscow — Siberia —"

"Oh! The *cold* places." She paused, then asked: "Going *alone?*" He knelt on the sofa she was sitting on and whispered almost into her ear:

"Unless *someone* — goes with me!"

"Naturally," replied Ethel, quite unmoved.

"Will — *you* — go?" And he waited breathlessly.

She thought a moment, looked at him again, and said quietly: "Chris! I wish *I'd* been here when you called — instead of that — *brat*."

He turned away up again to the window-seat crying: "Oh! This is unbearable."

Ethel said quite calmly: "Is it? Your *wife* all over again, eh?"

He came back to her: "No. I place you far above her, far above all petty suspicions and carping narrownesses. I value you as a woman of understanding."

"I am," she said frankly. "From what you've told me of your wife, *she* must be too."

"Don't treat me like this!" he pleaded distractedly.

"What shall I do?" asked Ethel with wide open eyes, "apologise? That's odd. I've been waiting for *you* to."

Brent turned away again with an impatient ejaculation. As he moved up toward the windows Alaric came in behind him through the door.

"Hello, Brent," he called out heartily. "H'are ye?"

"Very well, thank you, Alaric," he said, controlling his surprise.

"Good. The dear wife well too?"

"Very."

"And the sweet child?"

"Yes."

"You must bring 'em along sometime. The mater would love to see them and so would Ethel. Ethel loves babies, don't you, dear?" Without waiting for Ethel to reply he hurried on: "And talkin' of *babies*, have you seen *Margaret* anywhere?"

Ethel nodded in the direction of the garden: "Out there!"

"Splendid. The mater wants her. We've got to have a family meetin' about her and at once. Mater'll be here in a minute. Don't run away, Brent," and Alaric hurried out through the windows into the garden.

Brent hurried over to Ethel:

"I'm at the hotel. I'll be there until morning. Send me a message, will you? I'll wait up all night for one." He paused: "Will you?"

"Perhaps," replied Ethel.

"I'm sorry if anything I've said or done has hurt you. Believe me it is absolutely and entirely unnecessary."

"Don't say any more."

"Oh, if only —" he made an impulsive movement toward her. She checked him just as her mother appeared at the top of the stairs. At the same moment Bennett, the maid, came in through the door.

Mrs. Chichester greeted Brent courteously:

"How do you do, Mr. Brent? You will excuse me?" She turned to the maid:

"When did you see my niece last?"

"Not this hour, madam."

"Tell Jarvis to search the gardens — the stables — to look up and down the road."

"Yes, madam," and the maid hurried away in search of Jarvis.

Mrs. Chichester turned again to her guest:

"Pardon me — Mr. Brent."

"I'm just leaving, Mrs. Chichester."

"Oh, but you needn't —" expostulated that lady.

"I'm going abroad to-morrow. I just called to say 'good-bye.'"

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Chichester. "Well, I hope you and Mrs. Brent have a very pleasant trip. You must both call the moment you return."

"Thank you," replied Brent. "Good-bye, Mrs. Chichester — and — Ethel —" He looked meaningly and significantly at Ethel as he stood in the doorway. The next moment he was gone.

Ethel was facing the problem of her future with no one to turn to and ask for guidance. Her mother least of all. Mrs. Chichester had never encouraged confidence between her children and herself, consequently, any crisis they reached they had to either decide for themselves or appeal to others. Ethel had to decide for herself between now and to-morrow morning. Next day it would be too

late. What was she to do? Always loath to make up her mind until forced to, she decided to wait until night.

It might be that the something she was always expecting to snap in her nature would do so that evening and save her the supreme effort of taking the final step on her own initiative, and consequently having to bear the full responsibility. Whilst these thoughts were passing rapidly through her mind, Alaric hurried in through the windows from the garden.

"Not a sign of Margaret anywhere," he said furiously, throwing himself into a chair and fanning himself vigorously.

"This cannot go on," cried Mrs. Chichester.

"I should think not indeed. Running about all over the place."

Mrs. Chichester held up an open telegram:

"Mr. Hawkes telegraphs he will call to-morrow for his first report. What can I tell him?"

"What *will* you?" asked Alaric.

"Am I to tell him that every tutor I've engaged for her resigned? Not one stays more than a week. Can I tell him *that?*"

"You *could*, mater dear: but would it be wise?"

Mrs. Chichester went on:

"Am I to tell him that no *maid* will stay with her? That she shows no desire to improve? That she mimics and angers her teachers, refuses to study and plays impish tricks like some mischievous little elf? Am I to tell him *that?*"

"Serve her jolly well right if you did. Eh, Ethel?" said Alaric.

"It would," replied Ethel.

At that moment the footman and the maid both entered from the garden very much out of breath.

"I've searched everywhere, madam. Not a sign of her," said Bennett.

"Not in the stables, nor up or down the road. And the *dog's* missin', madam," added Jarvis.

Ethel sprang up.

"'*Pet*'?"

"No, miss. *She's* gnawin' a bone on the lawn. The *other*."

"That will do," and Mrs. Chichester dismissed them.

As they disappeared through the door, the old lady said appealingly to her children:

"Where *is* she?"

"Heaven knows," said Alaric.

"Oh, if I could only throw the whole business up."

"Wish to goodness we *could*. But the monthly cheque will be useful to-morrow, mater."

"That's it! That's it!" cried the unhappy woman.

"No one seems particularly anxious to snatch at *my* services as yet," said Alaric. "Course it's a dull time, Jerry tells me. But there we are. Not tuppence comin' in and the butcher's to be paid — likewise the other mouth-fillers. See where I'm comin'?"

"Have I not lain awake at night struggling with it?" replied the poor lady, almost on the verge of tears.

"Well, I'll tell you what," said the hope of the family; "I'll tell you what we'll do. Let's give the little beggar another month of it. Let her off lightly *this* time, and the moment the lawyer-bird's gone, read her the riot-act. Pull her up with a jerk. Ride her on the curb and *no rot!*"

"We could try," and Mrs. Chichester wiped her eyes: "Of course she *has* improved in her manner. For *that* we have to thank Ethel." She looked affectionately at

her daughter and choked back a sob. "Who could live near dear Ethel and *not* improve?"

"Ah! There we have it!" agreed Alaric.

"But I don't know how much of the improvement is genuine and how much pretended," gasped his mother.

"There we go again. She's got us fairly gravelled," said Alaric despondently.

"Of course I can truthfully tell him that, at times, she is very tractable and obedient."

"*At times!* About two minutes a week! When Jerry's around. How on earth *he* puts up with her I can't understand. She follows him about like a little dog. Listens to him. Behaves herself. But the moment he's gone — Poof! back she goes to her old tricks. I tell you she's a freak!" and Alaric dismissed the matter, and sat back fanning himself.

"Can I tell Mr. Hawkes that?" asked Mrs. Chichester.

"No," replied Alaric. "But I *would* say that the thousand a year is very hardly earned. Nat ought to have made it *ten* thousand. Dirt cheap at *that*. Tell him that out of respect for the dead man's wishes, we shall continue the job and that on the whole we have *hopes*. *Slight — but — hopes!*"

In through the open windows came the sound of dogs barking furiously. Ethel sprang up crying:

"'*Pet!*'" and hurried out into the garden.

Mrs. Chichester and Alaric went to the windows and looked out.

"Margaret!" cried Mrs. Chichester.

"And the mongrel! She's urgin' him on. The terrier's got '*Pet*' now." Alaric called out to the little poodle: "Fight him, old girl! Maul him! Woa there! '*Pet's*' down. There is Ethel on the scene."

he cried as Ethel ran across the lawn and picked up the badly treated poodle.

"Go and separate them," urged Mrs. Chichester.

"Not me," replied Alaric. "Ethel can handle 'em. I hate the little brutes. All hair and teeth. I cannot understand women coddling those little messes of snarling, smelly wool."

Ethel came indignantly into the room soothing the excited and ruffled "*Pet*." She was flushed and very angry. How dare that brat let her mongrel touch the aristocratic poodle?

A moment later Peg entered with the victorious "*Michael*" cradled in her arms. She had a roguish look of triumph in her eyes. Down the front of her charming new dress were the marks of "*Michael's*" muddy paws. Peg was also breathing quickly, and evidently more than a little excited.

"Take that animal out of the room!" cried Mrs. Chichester indignantly the moment Peg appeared.

Peg turned and walked straight out into the garden and began playing with "*Michael*" on the grass.

Mrs. Chichester waited for a few moments, then called out to her:

"Margaret!" Then more sharply: "Margaret! Come here! Do you hear me?"

Peg went on playing with "*Michael*" and just answered: "I hear ye."

"Come here at once!"

"Can '*Michael*' come in too?" came from the garden.

"*You* come in and leave that brute outside."

"If '*Michael*' can't come in, *I* don't want to," obstinately insisted Peg.

"Do as I tell you. Come here," commanded her aunt

Peg tied "*Michael*" to one of the French windows and then went slowly into the room and stood facing her aunt.

"Where have you been?" asked that lady.

"Down to the say-shore," replied Peg indifferently.

"Haven't I told you *never* to go out *alone?*"

"Ye have."

"How dare you disobey me?"

"Sure I had to."

"You *had* to?"

"I did."

"And *why?*"

"'*Michael*' needed a bath, so I took him down to the say-shore an' gave him one. He loves the wather, he does."

"Are there no *servants?*"

"There *are* sure."

"Isn't that *their* province?"

"Mebbe. But they hate '*Michael*' and I hate *them.* I wouldn't let them touch him."

"In other words you *wilfully* disobeyed me?"

"I did."

"Is this the way *my niece* should behave?"

"Mebbe not. It's the way *I* behave though."

"So my wishes count for nothing?"

The old lady looked so hurt as well as so angry that Peg softened and hastened to try and make it up with her aunt:

"Sure yer wishes *do* count with me, aunt. Indade they do."

"Don't say *indade.* There is no such word. *Indeed!*" corrected Mrs. Chichester.

"I beg your pardon, aunt. *Indeed* they do."

"Look at your dress!" suddenly cried Mrs. Chichester

as she caught sight of the marks of "*Michael's*" playfulness.

Peg looked at the stains demurely and said cheerfully:

"'*Michael*' did that. Sure they'll come off."

Mrs. Chichester looked at the flushed face of the young girl, at the mass of curly hair that had been carefully dressed by Bennett for dinner and was now hovering around her eyes untidily. The old lady straightened it:

"Can you not keep your hair out of your eyes? What do you think will become of you?"

"I hope to go to Heaven, like all good Catholics," said Peg.

Mrs. Chichester turned away with a gesture of despair.

"I give it up! I give it up!" she said, half-crying.

"I should say so," agreed Alaric. "Such rubbish!"

Peg shook her head the moment Mrs. Chichester turned her back, and the little red curls once more danced in front of her eyes.

"I do everything I can, every*thing*," complained Mrs. Chichester, "but you — you —" she broke off. "I don't understand you! I don't understand you!"

"Me father always said that," cried Peg eagerly; "and if *he* couldn't sure how could any one else?"

"Never mind your father," said Mrs. Chichester severely. Peg turned away.

"What *is* it?" continued the old lady. "I say *what is it?*"

"What is *what?*" asked Peg.

"Is it that you don't wish to improve? Is it *that?*"

"I'll tell ye what *I* think it is," began Peg helpfully, as if anxious to reach some satisfactory explanation: "I think there's a little divil in me lyin' there and every now and again he jumps out."

"A devil?" cried Mrs. Chichester, horrified.

"Yes, aunt," said Peg demurely.

"How dare you use such a word to *me?*"

"I didn't. I used it about *meself.* I don't know whether you have a divil in ye or not. I think *I* have."

Mrs. Chichester silenced her with a gesture:

"To-morrow I am to give Mr. Hawkes my first report on you."

Peg laughed suddenly and then checked herself quickly.

"And why did you do that?" asked her aunt severely.

"I had a picture of what ye're goin' to tell him."

"Your manners are abominable."

"Yes, aunt."

"What am I to tell Mr. Hawkes?"

"Tell him the truth, aunt, and shame the divil."

"Margaret!" and the old lady glared at her in horror.

"I beg yer pardon," said Peg meekly.

"Don't you wish to remain here?" continued Mrs. Chichester.

"Sometimes I do, an' sometimes I don't."

"Don't I do everything that is possible for you?"

"Yes, ye do everything possible *to* me—"

"What?"

"I mean—*for me.* I should have said *for* me, aunt!" and Peg's blue eyes twinkled mischievously.

"Then why do you constantly disobey me?" pursued the old lady.

"I suppose it is the original sin in me," replied Peg thoughtfully.

"*What?*" cried Mrs. Chichester again taken completely aback.

"Oh, I say, you know! that's good! Ha!" and

Alaric laughed heartily. Peg joined in and laughed heartily with him. Alaric immediately stopped.

Ethel took absolutely no notice of any one.

Peg sat down beside her aunt and explained to her: "Whenever I did anythin' wilful or disturbin' as a child me father always said it was the 'original sin' in me an' that I wasn't to be punished for it because I couldn't help it. Then he used to punish himself for *my* fault. An' when I saw it hurt him I usen't to do it again — for a while — at least. I think that was a grand way to bring up a daughter. I've been wonderin' since I've been here if an aunt could bring a niece up the same way." And she looked quizzically at Mrs. Chichester.

"Supposin', for instance, *you* were to punish yerself for everythin' wrong that I'd do, I might be so sorry I'd never do it again — but of course I might *not*. I am not sure about meself. I think me father knows me betther than I do meself."

"Your father must have been a very bad influence on you," said Mrs. Chichester sternly.

"No, he wasn't," contradicted Peg, hotly. "Me father's the best man —"

Mrs. Chichester interrupted her: "Margaret!"

Peg looked down sullenly and said: "Well, he was."

"Haven't I *told* you never to *contradict* me?"

"Well, *you* contradict *me* all the time."

"Stop!"

"Well, there's nothin' fair about your conthradictin' *me* and *me* not being able to —"

"Will you stop?"

"Well, now, aunt, ye will do me a favour if you will stop spakin' about me father the way you do. It hurts me, it does. I love my father and — I — I —"

"*Will — you — stop?*"

"I have stopped." And Peg sank back in her chair, breathing hard and her little fists punching against each other.

Her aunt then made the following proposition:

"If I consent to take charge of you for a further period, will you promise me you will do your best to show some advancement during the next month?"

"Yes, aunt," said Peg readily.

"And if I get fresh tutors for you, will you try to keep them?"

"Yes, aunt."

Mrs. Chichester questioned Alaric. "What do you think?"

"We might risk it," replied Alaric, turning to his sister: "Eh, Ethel?"

"Don't ask me," was Ethel's reply.

"Very well," said Mrs. Chichester determinedly, "Begin to-night."

"Begin what?" queried Peg, full of curiosity.

"To show that you mean to keep your promise. Work for a while."

"What at?" asked Peg, all eagerness to begin something.

"Get your books," said her aunt.

"Sure an' I will." And Peg turned to different parts of the room, finding an atlas here, a book of literature on the piano, an English history under the table. Finally she got them complete and sat down at the big table and prepared to study.

Jarvis came in with a letter on a salver.

"Well?" asked the old lady.

"For Miss Chichester, madam," and he handed Ethel the letter. "By hand, miss."

Ethel took the letter quite unconsciously and opened

it. Whilst she was reading it, Peg called the footman over to her.

"Jarvis," she said, "me dog '*Michael*' is outside there, tied up to the door. He's had a fight an' he's tired. Will ye put him to bed for me like a good boy?"

Jarvis went out disgustedly, untied the dog and put him in the kennel that had been specially made for him.

Poor Jarvis's life this last month had been most unhappy. The smooth and peaceful order of things in the house had departed. The coming of the "niece" had disturbed everything. Many were the comments below stairs on the intruder. The following is an example of the manner in which Peg was regarded by the footman and Mrs. Chichester's own maid, Bennett.

"A *niece!*" cried Bennett, sarcastically, just after Peg's arrival.

"So they *say!*" retorted Jarvis, mysteriously.

"What do you make of her?"

"Well, every family I've served and my mother before me, had a family skeleton. *She* is *ours*."

"Why, she hadn't a rag to her back when she came here. I'd be ashamed to be dressed as she was. You should have seen the one she goes to Mass in!"

"I did," said Jarvis indignantly. "All wrapped up in the '*Irish Times*.' Then I got ragged for putting her in the kitchen. Looked too good for her. And that dog! Can't go near it without it trying to bite me. I don't approve of either of 'em comin' into a quiet family like ours."

Just then the bell called him to the drawing-room and further discussion of Peg and "*Michael*" was deferred to a more suitable opportunity.

To return — Ethel read her letter and went to the writing-desk to reply to it.

"Who is it from?" asked Mrs. Chichester.

"Mr. Brent," replied Ethel, indifferently.

"Brent?" cried Alaric. "What on earth does he write to *you* for?"

"He wants me to do something for him," and she tore the letter up into the smallest pieces and placed them in a receptacle on the desk.

"*Do* something?" questioned Alaric.

"Yes. Nothing very much. I'll answer it here," and she proceeded quite imperturbably to write an answer.

Mrs. Chichester had seen that Peg had commenced to study — which meant — with Peg — roaming through her books until she found something that interested her. Then she would read it over and over again until she thought she knew it.

"Come, Alaric," and Mrs. Chichester left the room after admonishing Peg that an hour would be sufficient to sit up.

Alaric watched his mother go out of the room and then he slouched over to Peg and grinned chaffingly down at her.

"*Original-sin*, eh? That's a good 'un."

Peg looked up at him and a dangerous gleam came into her eyes. Alaric was not going to mock at her and get away unscathed. All unconscious of his danger, Alaric went on:

"Study all the pretty maps and things."

Peg closed the book with a slam and took it up and held it in a threatening manner as she glared at Alaric.

"Little devil!" and Alaric laughed at her.

"He's tuggin' at me now!" replied Peg. "The devil must hate knowledge. He always tries to keep *me* from gettin' any."

Alaric laughed again maliciously.

"Watch your cousin! Model yourself on *Ethel!* Eh? What?"

Peg hurled the book at him; he dodged it and it just escaped hitting Ethel, who turned at the disturbance.

Alaric hurried out to avoid any further conflict — calling back over his shoulder:

"Little devil."

Peg picked up the book, looked at Ethel, who had finished the letter and had put it into an unaddressed envelope. She took a cigarette out of her case and lit it neatly.

Peg took one out of the box on the table and lit it clumsily, though in exact imitation of Ethel.

When Ethel had addressed the envelope she turned and saw Peg smoking, sitting on the edge of the table, watching Ethel with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

Ethel impatiently threw her cigarette on to the ash tray on the desk.

Peg did the same action identically into a tray on the table.

Ethel rose indignantly and faced Peg.

"Why do you watch me?"

"Aunt told me to. Aren't ye me model? I'm to mould meself on you, sure!"

Ethel turned away furiously and began to ascend the stairs.

Peg followed her and called up to her:

"May I talk to ye?"

"You were told to *study*," replied Ethel, angrily.

"Won't ye let me talk to ye? Please, do!" urged Peg. Then she went on: "Ye haven't said a kind wurrd to me since I've been here." She stopped a moment. Ethel said nothing. Peg continued: "Sure, we're both girls, in the same house, of the same family,

an' pretty much the same age, and yet ye never look at me except as if ye hated me. Why, ye like yer dog better than you do *me*, don't ye?"

Ethel looked down at "*Pet*" and fondled her and kissed her.

"I'm sorry '*Michael*' hurt him. It was a cowardly thing of '*Michael*' to do to snap at a little bit of a thing like that is. But it wasn't '*Michael's*' fault. *I* set him on to it, an' he always obeys me. He'd bite a lion or *that*"—and she pointed to the poor little poodle—"if I set him onto it."

"You made him attack '*Pet*'?" cried Ethel.

"I did. I hate it. It's so sleek and fat and well-bred. I hate fat, well-bred things. I like them thin and common, like '*Michael*' and meself. A dog should be made to look like a dog if it *is* a dog. No one could mistake '*Michael*' for anything else *but* a dog. But *that* thing—"

Ethel gave an indignant ejaculation and again started to go upstairs.

Peg entreated her:

"Don't go for a minnit. Won't ye make friends with me?"

"We've nothing in common," replied Ethel.

"Sure, that doesn't prevent us bein' dacent to each other, does it?"

"*Decent?*" cried Ethel in disgust.

"I'll meet ye three quarthers o' the way if ye'll show just one little generous feelin' toward me." She paused as she looked pleadingly at Ethel: "Ye would if ye knew what was in me mind."

Ethel came down to the last step of the stairs and stood there looking down searchingly at Peg. Finally she said:

"You're a strange creature."

"Not at all. It's you people here who are strange — I'm just what I am. I don't pretend or want to be anythin' else. But you — all of you — seem to be trying to be somethin' different to what ye are."

"What do you mean?" asked Ethel suspiciously.

"Oh, I watch ye and listen to ye," went on Peg eagerly. "Ye turn yer face to the wurrld as much as to say, 'Look at me! aren't I the beautiful, quiet, well-bred, aisy-goin', sweet-tempered young lady?' An' yer nothin' o' the kind, are ye?"

Ethel went slowly over to Peg and looked into her eyes:

"What am I?"

"Sure ye've got the breedin' all right, an' the nice-looks, an' the beautiful manners — but down in yer heart an' up in yer brain ye're worryin' yer little soul all the time, aren't ye?" And Peg paused. Ethel looked down. Peg after a moment continued: "An' ye've got a temper just as bad as mine. It's a beautiful temper ye have, Ethel. It's a shame not to let a temper like that out in the daylight now and again. But ye kape it out o' sight because it isn't good form to show it. An' with all yer fine advantages ye're not a bit happy, are ye? Are ye, Ethel?"

Ethel, moved in spite of herself, admitted involuntarily: "No. I'm not!"

Peg went on quietly: "Nor am I — in this house. Couldn't we try and comfort each other?" There was a look of genuine sympathy with Ethel in Peg's big blue eyes and a note of tender entreaty in her tone.

"Comfort? *You* — comfort *me?*" cried Ethel, in disdain.

"Yes, Ethel dear, *me* comfort *you*. They say 'a

beautiful thought makes a beautiful face'; an' by the same token, sure a kind action gives ye a warm feelin' around the heart. An' ye might have that if ye'd only be a little kind to me — sometime."

Peg's honest sincerity and depth of feeling had suddenly a marked effect on the, apparently, callous Ethel. She turned to Peg and there was a different expression entirely in her look and tone as she said.

"I'm afraid I *have* been a little inconsiderate."

"Ye have, sure," said Peg.

"What would you like me to do?"

"I'd like ye to spake to me sometimes as though I were a human bein' an' not a clod o' earth."

"Very well, Margaret, I will. Good night." And feeling the matter was closed, Ethel again turned away to leave the room.

"Will ye give me another minnit — *now* — *please*," called Peg, after her, excitedly.

Ethel looked at the letter in her hand, hesitated, then re-entered the room and went down to Peg and said gently:

"All right."

"Only just a minnit," repeated Peg, breathlessly.

"What do you want, Margaret?"

"I want ye to tell me somethin'."

"What is it?"

Peg paused — looked at Ethel bashfully — dropped her eyes to the ground — took a deep breath — then said as fast as she could speak:

"Do ye know anything about — about *love?*"

"Love?" echoed Ethel, very much astonished.

"Yes," said Peg. "Have ye ever been in love?" and she waited expectantly for Ethel's answer.

Ethel put the letter she had just written to Mr. Brent slowly behind her back and answered coldly:

"No. I have not."

"Have ye ever *thought* about it?"

"Yes."

"*What* do ye think about it?" questioned Peg eagerly.

"Rot!" replied Ethel, decidedly.

"*Rot? Rot?*" cried Peg, unable to believe her ears.

"Sentimental nonsense that only exists in novels."

"Ye're wrong!" insisted the anxious Peg; "ye're wrong. It's the most wondherful thing in the wurrld!"

Ethel brought the letter up to her eyes and read the superscription. "Think so?" she asked calmly.

"I do," cried Peg hotly. "I do. It's the most wondherful thing in the whole wurrld. To love a good man who loves you. A man that made ye hot and cold by turns: burnin' like fire one minnit an' freezin' like ice the next. Who made yer heart leap with happiness when he came near ye, an' ache with sorrow when he went away from ye. Haven't ye ever felt like that, Ethel?"

"Never!" replied Ethel, positively.

Peg went on: "Oh! it's mighty disturbin', I'm tellin' ye. Sometimes ye walk on air, an' at others yer feet are like lead. An' at one time the wurrld's all beautiful flowers and sweet music and grand poetry — an' at another it's all coffins, an' corpses, an' shrouds." She shook her head seriously: "Oh! I tell ye it's mighty disturbin'."

Ethel looked at her inquiringly:

"How do you know this?"

Peg grew confused, then answered hurriedly:

"I've been readin' about it — in a book. It's wondherful — that's what it is."

"When you're a little older you will think differently," corrected Ethel, severely. "You will realise then that it is all very primitive."

"*Primitive?*" asked Peg, disappointedly.

"Of the earth — earthy," answered Ethel.

Peg thought a moment: "Sure I suppose *I* am then." She looked half-shyly at Ethel and asked her quietly: "Don't you like men?"

"Not much," answered Ethel, indifferently.

"Just dogs?" persisted Peg.

"You can trust *them*," and Ethel caressed "*Pet's*" little pink snout.

"That's thrue," agreed Peg. "I like dogs, too. But I like children betther. Wouldn't ye like to have a child of yer own, Ethel?"

That young lady looked at her horrifiedly: "*Margaret!*"

"Well, *I* would," said Peg. "That's the rale woman in us. Ye know ye only fondle that animal because ye haven't got a child of yer own to take in yer arms. Sure that's the reason all the selfish women have pet dogs. They're afraid to have childhren. I've watched them! O' course a dog's all very well, but he can't talk to ye, an' comfort ye, an' cry to ye, an' laugh to ye like a child can."

Peg paused, then pointed to "*Pet*" and launched the following wonderful statement:

"Sure *that* thing could never be President of the United States. But if ye had a baby he might grow up to it."

"That's very *Irish*," sneered Ethel.

"Faith I think it's very human," answered Peg. "I wish ye had some more of it, Ethel, acushla."

Ethel walked away as though to dismiss the whole subject. It was most distasteful to her:

"It is not customary for girls to talk about such things."

"I know it isn't," said Peg. "An' the more's the pity. Why shouldn't we discuss events of national importance? We *think* about them — very well! why shouldn't we *talk* about them. Why shouldn't girls be taught to be honest with each other? I tell ye if there was more honesty in this wurrld there wouldn't be half the sin in it, that there wouldn't."

"Really —" began Ethel —

"Let *us* be honest with each other, Ethel," and Peg went right over to her and looked at her compassionately.

"What do ye mean?" said Ethel with a sudden contraction of her breath.

"You like Mr. Brent, don't ye?"

So! the moment had come. The little spy had been watching her. Well, she would fight this common little Irish nobody to the bitter end. All the anger in her nature surged uppermost as Ethel answered Peg — but she kept her voice under complete control and once more put the letter behind her back.

"Certainly I like Mr. Brent. He is a very old friend of the family!"

"He's got a wife?"

"He has!"

"An' a baby?"

"Yes — and a baby." Ethel was not going to betray herself. She would just wait and see what course this creature was going to take with her.

Peg went on:

"Of course I've never seen the wife or the baby because

he never seems to have them with him when he calls here. But I've often heard Alaric ask afther them."

"Well?" asked Ethel coldly.

"Is it usual for English husbands with babies to kiss other women's hands?" and Peg looked swiftly at her cousin.

Ethel checked an outburst and said quite calmly:

"It is a very old and a very respected custom."

"The devil doubt it but it's *old*. I'm not so sure about the *respect*. Why doesn't he kiss me *aunt's* hand as well?"

Ethel went quickly to the staircase. She could not control herself much longer. It was becoming unbearable. As she crossed the room she said with as little heat as possible:

"You don't understand."

"Well, but I'm thryin' to," persisted Peg. "That's why I watch *ye* all the time."

Ethel turned: she was now at bay:

"*You watch me?*"

"Aren't ye me model?"

"It's contemptible!" cried Ethel.

"Sure I only saw the '*old* and *respected custom*' by accident — when I came in through *there* a month ago — an' once since when I came in again by accident — a few days afterwards. I couldn't help seein' it both times. And as for bein' *contemptible* I'm not so sure the *custom* doesn't deserve all the *contempt*."

Ethel was now thoroughly aroused:

"I suppose it is too much to expect that a child of the *common* people should understand the customs of *decent* people."

"Mebbe it is," replied Peg. "But I don't see why

the *common people* should have *all* the decency and the aristocracy *none*."

"It is impossible to talk to you. I was foolish to have stayed here. You don't understand: you never could understand —"

Peg interrupted:

"Why, I never saw ye excited before: — not a bit of colour in yer cheeks till now — except *twice*. Ye look just as ye did when Mr. Brent followed that *old* and *respected* custom on yer hand," cried Peg.

Ethel answered, this time, excitedly and indignantly, giving full and free vent to her just anger:

"Be good enough never to speak to me again as long as you're in this house. If I had *my* way you'd leave it this moment. As it is — as it is —" her voice rose almost to a scream: her rage was unbridled.

What more she might have said was checked by the door opening and Jarvis showing in Jerry.

Jerry walked cheerfully and smilingly into the room and was amazed to find the two young ladies glaring at each other and apparently in the midst of a conflict.

All power of speech left him as he stood looking in amazement at the combatants.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TEMPLE OF FRIENDSHIP

ETHEL was the first to recover her equanimity.

She came down the steps, greeted Jerry with a genial handshake, asked to be excused for a moment, and after halting the departing Jarvis she went over to the writing-desk, opened the envelope, added a postscript, addressed a new envelope, put the augmented epistle inside it, sealed it, handed it to Jarvis, saying:

"Send that at once. No answer."

As Jarvis left the room, Ethel turned to speak to Jerry. Meanwhile, that young gentleman had greeted Peg:

"And how is Miss Peg this evening?"

"I'm fine, Mr. Jerry, thank ye." She looked at him admiringly. He was in evening dress, a light overcoat was thrown across his arm and a Homburg hat in his hand.

"Let me take your hat and coat?" she suggested.

"No, thank you," said Jerry. "I'm not going to stay."

"Aren't ye?" she asked disappointedly.

"Is your aunt in?"

"Yes, she's in. Is it *her* ye've come to see?"

"Yes," replied Jerry.

At that moment Ethel joined them.

"I came over to ask Mrs. Chichester's permission for you two young ladies to go to a dance to-night. It's just across from here at the assembly rooms.

Peg beamed joyfully. It was just what she wanted to do. Ethel viewed the suggestion differently:

"It's very kind of you," she said; "but it's quite impossible."

"Oh!" ejaculated Peg.

"Impossible?" exclaimed Jerry.

"I'm sorry," and Ethel went to the door.

"So am I," replied Jerry regretfully. "I would have given you longer notice only it was made up on the spur of the moment. Don't you think you could?"

"I don't care for dancing. Besides,— my head aches."

"What a pity," exclaimed the disappointed young man. Then he said eagerly: "Do you suppose your mother would allow Miss Margaret to go?"

"I'll ask her," and Ethel left the room.

Peg ran across, stopped the door from closing and called after Ethel:

"I didn't mean to hurt ye — indade I didn't. I wanted to talk to ye, that was all — an' ye made me angry —" Ethel disappeared without even turning her head.

Peg came into the room ruefully, and sat down on the sofa. She was thoroughly unhappy.

Jerry looked at her a moment, walked over to her and asked her: "What's the matter?"

"One of us girls has been brought-up all wrong. I tried to make friends with her just now and only made her angry, as I do every one in this house whenever I open my mouth."

"Aren't you friends?"

"Indade — *indeed* — *indeed* —we're *not*. None of them are with me."

"What a shame!"

"Wait until ye hear what me aunt says when ye ask her about the dance!"

"Don't you think she'll let you go?"

"No. I do *not*." She looked at him quizzically for a moment. Then she burst out laughing. He was glad to see her spirits had returned and wondered as to the cause. She looked up at him, her eyes dancing with mischief:

"Misther Jerry, will ye take me all the same if me aunt doesn't consent?"

"Why, Peg —" he began, astonishedly.

"But I haven't got an evenin' dress. Does it matter?"

"Not in the least, but —"

"Will this one do?"

"It's very charming — still —"

"Stains and all?"

"My dear Peg —"

"Perhaps they'll rub out. It's the prettiest one me aunt gave me — an' I put it on to-night — because — I thought you — that is, *someone* might come here to-night. At least, I *hoped* he would, an' ye've come!" Suddenly she broke out passionately: "Oh, ye must take me! Ye must! I haven't had a bit of pleasure since I've been here. It will be wondherful. Besides I wouldn't rest all night with you dancin' over there an' me a prisoner over here."

"Now, Peg —" he tried to begin —

"It's no use, I tell ye. Ye've *got* to take me. An' if it goes against yer conscience to do it, *I'll* take *you*. Stop, now! Listen! The moment they're all in bed, an' the lights are all out I'll creep down here an' out through those windows an' you'll meet me at the foot o' the path. An' it's no use ye sayin' anythin' because I'm just goin' to that dance. So make up yer mind to it."

Jerry laughed uncomfortably. She was quite capable of doing such a thing and getting herself into a great deal of unnecessary trouble. So he tried to dissuade her. He laughed cheerfully.

"There may not be any occasion to do such a wild, foolish thing. Why, your aunt may be delighted."

"Me aunt has never been *delighted* since she was born!"

"Have you been annoying her again?"

"Faith, I'm always doin' that."

He looked at the litter of books on the table and picked up one.

"How are your studies progressing?"

"Just the way they always have," replied Peg. "Not at all."

"Why not?"

"I don't like studying," answered Peg earnestly.

"And are you going through life doing only the things you *like?*"

"Sure, that's all life's for."

"Oh, no, it isn't. As you grow older you'll find the only real happiness in life is in doing things for others."

"Oh!" she said quickly: "I like doin' them *now* for others." She looked up at him a moment, then down at a book and finished under her breath: "When I *like* the *others*."

He looked at her intently a moment and was just going to speak when she broke in quickly:

"What's the use of learnin' the heights of mountains whose names I can't pronounce and I'm never goin' to climb? And I'm very much surprised at me aunt allowin' me to read about the doin's of a lot of dead kings who did things we ought to thry and forget."

"They made history," said Jerry.

"Well, they ought to have been ashamed of themselves. I don't care how high Mont Blanc is nor when William the Conqueror landed in England."

"Oh, nonsense!" reasoned Jerry —

"I tell ye I *hate* English history. It makes all me Irish blood boil." Suddenly she burst into a reproduction of the far-off father, suiting action to word and climaxing at the end, as she had so often heard him finish:

"'What *is* England? What is it, I say. I'll tell ye! A mane little bit of counthry thramplin' down a fine race like *ours!*' That's what me father sez, and that's the way he sez it. An' when he brings his fist down like *that*—" and she showed Jerry exactly how her father did it —"when he brings his fist down like *that*, it doesn't matther how many people are listenin' to him, there isn't one dares to conthradict him. Me father feels very strongly about English History. An' I don't want to learn it."

"Is it fair to your aunt?" asked Jerry.

Peg grew sullen and gloomy. She liked to be praised, but all she ever got in that house was blame. And now he was following the way of the others. It was hard. No one understood her.

"Is it fair to your aunt?" he repeated.

"No. I don't suppose it is."

"Is it fair to yourself?"

"That's right — scold me, lecture me! You sound just like me aunt, ye do."

"But you'll be at such a disadvantage by-and-by with other young ladies without half your intelligence just because they know things you refuse to learn. Then you'll be ashamed."

She looked at him pleadingly.

"Are *you* ashamed of me? Because I'm ignorant? Are ye?"

"Not a bit," replied Jerry heartily. "I was just the same at your age. I used to scamp at school and shirk at college until I found myself so far behind fellows I despised that *I* was ashamed. Then I went after them tooth and nail until I caught them up and passed them."

"Did ye?" cried Peg eagerly.

"I did."

"*I* will, too," she said.

"*Will* you?"

She nodded vigorously:

"I will — *indeed* I will. From now on I'll do everythin' they tell me an' learn everythin' they teach me, if it kills me!"

"I wish you would," he said seriously.

"An' when I pass everybody else, an' know more than anyone *ever* knew — will ye be very proud of me?"

"Yes, Peg. Even more than I am now."

"Are ye *now?*"

"I am. Proud to think you are my friend."

"Ye'd ha' won yer wager. We *are* friends, aren't we?"

"I am *yours*."

"Sure, I'm *yours all right*."

She looked at him, laughed shyly and pressed her cheeks. He was watching her closely.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked.

"Do ye know what Tom Moore wrote about *Friendship?*"

"No."

"Shall I tell ye?" excitedly.

"Do."

"See if anywan's comin' first."

As he looked around the room and outside the door to detect the advent of an intruder Peg sat at the piano and played very softly the prelude to an old Irish song.

As Jerry walked back he said surprisedly: "Oh! so you play?"

Peg nodded laughingly.

"Afther a fashion. Me father taught me. Me aunt can't bear it. An' the teacher in the house said it was *dhreadful* and that I must play scales for two years more before I thry a tune. She said I had no ear."

Jerry laughed as he replied: "I think they're very pretty."

"*Do* ye? Well watch *them* an' mebbe ye won't mind me singin' so much. An' afther all ye're only a farmer, aren't ye?"

"Hardly that," and Jerry laughed again.

Her fingers played lightly over the keys for a moment.

"This is called '*A Temple to Friendship*,'" she explained.

"Indeed?"

"And it's about a girl who built a shrine and she thought she wanted to put '*Friendship*' into it. She *thought* she wanted '*Friendship*.' Afther a while she found out her mistake. Listen:" And Peg sang, in a pure, tremulous little voice that vibrated with feeling the following:

"'A temple to Friendship,' said Laura enchanted,
'I'll build in this garden: the thought is divine!'
Her temple was built and she now only wanted
An Image of Friendship to place on the shrine.

She flew to a sculptor who set down before her
A Friendship the fairest his art could invent!

But so cold and so dull that the Youthful adorer
Saw plainly this was not the idol she meant.

'Oh! never,' she cried, 'could I think of enshrining
An image whose looks are so joyless and dim —
But yon little god (Cupid) upon roses reclining,
We'll make, if you please, sir, a Friendship of him.'

So the bargain was struck; with the little god laden
She joyfully flew to her shrine in the grove:
'Farewell,' said the sculptor, 'you're not the first maiden,
Who came but for Friendship and took away — Love.'"

She played the refrain softly after she had finished the song. Gradually the last note died away.

Jerry looked at her in amazement.

"Where in the world did you learn that?"

"Me father taught it to me," replied Peg simply. "Tom Moore's one of me father's prayer-books."

Jerry repeated as though to himself:

"'Who came but for *Friendship* and took away *Love!*'"

"Isn't that beautiful?" And Peg's face had a rapt expression as she looked up at Jerry.

"Do you believe it?" he asked.

"Didn't Tom Moore write it?" she answered.

"Is there anything *better* than Friendship between man and woman?"

She nodded:

"Indeed there is. Me father felt it for me mother or I wouldn't be here now. Me father loved me mother with all his strength and all his soul."

"Could *you* ever feel it?" he asked, and there was an anxious look in his eyes as he waited for her to answer.

She nodded.

"*Have* you ever felt it?" he went on.

"All me life," answered Peg in a whisper.

"As a child, perhaps," remarked Jerry. "Some day it will come to you as a *woman* and then the whole world will change for you."

"I know," replied Peg softly. "I've felt it comin'."

"Since when?" and once again suspense was in his voice.

"Ever since — ever since —" suddenly she broke off breathlessly and throwing her arms above her head as though in appeal she cried:

"Oh, I do want to improve meself. *Now* I wish I *had* been born a lady. I'd be more worthy of —"

"*What? Whom?*" asked Jerry urgently and waiting anxiously for her answer.

Peg regained control of herself, and cowering down again on to the piano-stool she went on hurriedly:

"I want knowledge now. I know what you mean by bein' at a disadvantage. I used to despise learnin'. I've laughed at it. I never will again. Why I can't even talk yer language. Every wurrd I use is wrong. This book ye gave me — the '*Love Stories of the World*,' I've never seen anythin' like it. I never knew of such people. I didn't dhream what a wondherful power in the wurrld was the power of love. I used to think it somethin' to kape to yerself and never spake of out in the open. Now I know it's the one great big wondherful power in the wurrld. It's me love for me father has kept faith and hope alive in me heart. I was happy with him. I never wanted to lave him. Now I see there is another happiness, too an' it's beyond me. I'm no one's equal. I'm just a little Irish nothin'—"

"Don't say that," Jerry interrupted.

"There's an obstinate bad something in me that holds me back every time I want to go forward. Sometimes the good little somethin' tries so hard to win, but the bad bates it. It just bates it, it does."

"What you call the *bad* is the cry of youth that resents being curbed: and the *good* is the *woman* in you struggling for an outlet," explained Jerry.

"Will you help me to give it an outlet, Mr. Jerry?"

"In any way in my power, Peg."

As they stood looking at each other the momentary something was trembling on both their lips and beating in both of their hearts. The something — old as time, yet new as birth — that great transmuter of affection into love, of hope into faith. It had come to them — yet neither dared speak.

Peg read his silence wrongly.

She blushed to the roots of her hair and her heart beat fast with shame. She laughed a deliberately misleading laugh and, looking up roguishly at him, said, her eyes dancing with apparent mischief, though the tear lurked behind the lid:

"Thank ye for promisin' to help me, Misther Jerry. But would ye mind very much if the *bad* little somethin' had one more *spurt* before I killed it altogether? Would ye?"

"Why, how do you mean?"

"Take me to that dance to-night — even without me aunt's permission, will ye? I'll never forget ye for it if ye will. An' it'll be the last wrong thing I'll ever do. I'm just burnin' all over at the thought of it. My heart's burstin' for it." She suddenly hummed a waltz refrain and whirled around the room, the incarnation of child-like abandonment.

Mrs. Chichester came slowly down the stairs, going

in horror at the little bouncing figure. As Peg whirled past the newel post she caught sight of her aunt. She stopped dead.

"What does this mean?" asked Mrs. Chichester angrily.

Peg crept away and sank down into a chair:

Jerry came to the rescue. He shook hands with Mrs. Chichester and said:

"I want you to do something that will make the child very happy. Will you allow her to go to a dance at the Assembly Rooms to-night?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Chichester severely. "I am surprised at you for asking such a thing."

"I could have told ye what she'd say wurrd for wurrd!" muttered Peg.

"I beg your pardon," said Jerry, straightening up, hurt at the old lady's tone. "The invitation was also extended to your daughter, but she declined. I thought you might be pleased to give your niece a little pleasure."

"Go to a dance — unchaperoned?"

"My mother and sisters will be there."

"A child of her age?" said Mrs. Chichester.

"*Child* is it?" cried Peg vehemently. "I'd have ye know my father lets me go anywhere —"

"*Margaret!*" and the old lady attempted to silence Peg with a gesture. Peg changed her tone and pleaded:

"Plaze let me go. I'll study me head off to-morrow if ye'll only let me dance me feet off a bit to-night. Plaze let me!"

The old lady raised her hand commanding Peg to stop. Then turning to Jerry she said in a much softer tone:

"It was most kind of you to trouble to come over.

You must pardon me if I seem ungracious — but it is quite out of the question."

Peg sprang up, eager to argue it out.

Jerry looked at her as if imploring her not to anger her aunt any further. He shook Mrs. Chichester's hand and said:

"I'm sorry. Good night." He picked up his hat and coat and went to the door.

"Kindly remember me to your mother and sisters," added Mrs. Chichester gently.

"With pleasure," and Jerry opened the door.

"Good night, Misther Jerry," called Peg.

He turned and saw Peg deliberately pointing to the pathway and indicating that he was to meet her there.

Mrs. Chichester happened to look around just in time to catch her. Peg reddened and stood trapped.

Jerry went out.

The old lady looked at her for several moments without speaking. Finally she asked:

"What did you mean by dancing in that disgraceful way? And what did you mean by those signs you were making?"

Peg said nothing.

"Are you always going to be a disgrace to us? Are you ever going to learn how to behave?"

"Yes, aunt," said Peg, and the words came out in a torrent. "I'm never goin' to do anythin' agen to annoy ye — *afther to-night*. I'm goin' to wurrk hard too — *afther to-night*. Don't ye see what a disadvantage I'd be at with girls without half me intelligence if I don't? Don't ye see it? *I* do. I'd be ashamed — that's what I'd be. Well — I'm goin' afther them tooth and nail an' I'm goin' to catch them up an' pass them an' then he'll — *ye'll* — *ye'll* — be proud of me — that ye will."

"What is all this?" asked the amazed old lady.

"It's what I'm goin' to do — *afther to-night.*"

"I'm very glad to hear it."

"I knew ye would be. An' I'll never be any more throuble to ye — *afther to-night.*"

"I hope you will be of the same mind in the morning."

"So do I, aunt. D'ye mind if I stay up for another hour? I'd like to begin now."

"Begin *what?*"

"Tryin' to pass people — tooth an' nail. May I study for just one more hour?"

"Very well. Just an hour."

"Sure that'll be fine." She went to the table and began eagerly to arrange her books once again.

"Turn off the lights when you've finished," said Mrs. Chichester.

"Yes, aunt. Are you goin' to bed now?"

"I am."

"Everybody in the house goin' to bed — except me?"

"Everybody."

"That's good," said Peg, with a sigh of relief.

"Don't make any noise," admonished the old lady.

"Not a sound, aunt," agreed Peg.

"Good night," and Mrs. Chichester went to the stairs.

"Good night, aunt! Oh! there's somethin' else. I thought perhaps I would have to be gettin' back home to me father but I had a letther from him this mornin' an' it was quite cheerful — so I think — if ye don't mind — I'd like to stay another month. Can I?"

"We'll talk it over with Mr. Hawkes in the morning," Mrs. Chichester said coldly and went on up the stairs.

Peg watched her out of sight then jumped up all excitement and danced around the room. She stopped by the table, looked at the open books in disgust — with a

quick movement swept them off the table. Then she listened panic-stricken and hurriedly knelt down and picked them all up again. Then she hurried over to the windows and looked out into the night. The moonlight was streaming full down the path through the trees. In a few moments Peg went to the foot of the stairs and listened. Not hearing anything she crept upstairs into her own little Mauve-Room, found a cloak and some slippers and a hat and just as quietly crept down again into the living-room.

She just had time to hide the cloak and hat and slippers on the immense window-seat when the door opened and Ethel came into the room. She walked straight to the staircase without looking at Peg, and began to mount the stairs.

"Hello, Ethel!" called out Peg, all remembrance of the violent discussion gone in the excitement of the present. "I'm studyin' for an hour. Are yez still angry with me? Won't ye say 'good night'? Well, then, I will. Good night, Ethel, an' God bless you."

Ethel disappeared in the bend of the stairs.

Peg listened again until all was still, then she crept across the room, turned back the carpet and picked up her treasure — her marvelous book of "*Love-Stories.*"

She took it to the table, made an island of it as was her wont — and began to read — the precious book concealed by histories and atlases, et cetera.

Her little heart beat excitedly.

The one thought that beat through her quick brain was:

"Will Jerry come back for me?"

CHAPTER IX

THE DANCE AND ITS SEQUEL

Mrs. Chichester's uncompromising attitude had a great deal to do with what followed. Had she shown the slightest suggestion of fairness or kindness toward Peg things might have resulted differently.

But her adamantine attitude decided Jerry.

He resolved to fly in the face of the proprieties.

He would take the little child to the Assembly Rooms, put her in the care of his mother and sisters and safeguard at least one evening's pleasure for her.

And this he did.

He met her at the foot of the path when he saw all the lights disappear in the house.

They walked across the lawns and meadows on that beautiful July night with the moon shining down on them.

Once at the great hall his mother put the gauche little Peg at her ease, introduced her to the most charming of partners, and saw that everything was done to minister to her enjoyment.

It was a wonderful night for Peg.

She danced every dance: she had the supper one with Jerry: she laughed and sang and romped and was the centre of all the attention. What might have appeared boldness in another with Peg was just her innocent, wilful, child-like nature. She made a wonderful impression that night and became a general favourite. She wanted it to go on and on and to never stop. When the last waltz was played, and encored, and the ball was

He kissed her hand reverently

really ended, Peg felt a pang of regret such as she had not felt for a long, long time.

It was the first real note of pleasure she had experienced in England and now it was ended and to-morrow had to be faced and the truth told. What would happen? What course would Mrs. Chichester take? Send her away? Perhaps — and then —? Peg brushed the thought away. At all events she had enjoyed that one wonderful evening.

"Oh, I am so happy! So happy!" she cried, as Jerry led her back to her seat at the conclusion of the last dance. "Sure the whole wurrld seems to be goin' round and round and round in one grand waltz. It's the first time I've been rale'y happy since I came here. And it's been through you! Through you! Thank ye, Jerry."

"I'm glad it has been through me, Peg," said Jerry quietly.

"Faith these are the only moments in life that count — the happy ones. Why can't it always be like this? Why shouldn't we just laugh and dance our way through it all?" went on Peg excitedly. The rhythm of the movement of the dance was in her blood: the lights were dancing before her eyes: the music beat in on her brain.

"I wish I could make the world one great ball-room for you," said Jerry earnestly.

"Do ye?" asked Peg tremulously.

"I do."

"With you as me partner?"

"Yes."

"Dancin' ivery dance with me?"

"Every one."

"Wouldn't that be beautiful? An' no creepin' back afther it all like a thief in the night?"

"No," replied Jerry. "Your own mistress, free to do whatever you wished."

"Oh," she cried impulsively; "wouldn't that be wondherful!" Suddenly she gave a little elfish chuckle and whispered:

"But half the fun to-night has been that I'm supposed to be sleepin' across beyant there and *here* I am stalin' time." She crooned softly:

"'Sure the best of all *ways* to lengthen our *days*,
Is to stale a few hours from the *night*, me dear.'"

"You've stolen them!" said Jerry softly.

"I'm a thief, sure!" replied Peg with a little laugh.

"You're the — the sweetest — dearest —" he suddenly checked himself.

His mother had come across to say "Good night" to Peg. In a few moments his sisters joined them. They all pressed invitations on Peg to call on them at "*Noel's Folly*" and with Mrs. Chichester's permission, to stay some days.

Jerry got her cloak and just as they were leaving the hall the band struck up again, by special request, and began to play a new French waltz. Peg wanted to go back but Jerry suggested it would be wiser now for her to go home since his mother had driven away.

Back across the meadows and through the lanes, under that marvellous moon and with the wild beat of the Continental Walse echoing from the ball-room, walked Peg and Jerry, side by side, in silence. Both were busy with their thoughts. After a little while Peg whispered:

"Jerry?"

"Peg?"

"What were you goin' to say to me when yer mother came up to us just now?"

"Something it would be better to say in the daylight, Peg."

"Sure, why the daylight? Look at the moon so high in the heavens."

"Wait until to-morrow."

"I'll not slape a wink thinkin' of all the wondherful things that happened this night. Tell me — Jerry — yer mother and yer sisters — they weren't ashamed o' me, were they?"

"Why of course not. They were charmed with you."

"Were they? Rale'y?"

"Really, Peg."

"Shall I ever see them again?"

"I hope some day you'll see a great deal of them."

They reached the windows leading into the now famous — to Peg — living-room. He held out his hand:

"Good night, Peg."

"What a hurry ye are in to get rid o' me. An' a night like this may never come again."

Suddenly a quick flash of jealousy startled through her:

"Are ye goin' back to the dance? Are ye goin' to dance the extra ones ye wouldn't take me back for?"

"Not if you don't wish me to."

"Plaze don't," she pleaded earnestly. "I wouldn't rest aisy if I thought of you with yer arm around one of those fine ladies' waists, as it was around mine such a little while ago — an' me all alone here. Ye won't, wid ye?"

"No, Peg; I will not."

"An' will ye think o' me?"

"Yes, Peg, I will."

"All the time?"

"All the time."

"An' I will o' you. An' I'll pray for ye that no harm may come to ye, an' that *He* will bless ye for makin' me happy."

"Thank you, Peg."

He motioned her to go in. He was getting anxious. Their voices might be heard.

"Must I go in *now?*" asked Peg. "*Now?*" she repeated.

"You must."

"With the moon so high in the heavens?"

"Someone might come."

"An' the music comin' across the lawn?"

"I don't want you to get into trouble," he urged.

"All right," said Peg, half resignedly. "I suppose you know best. Good night, Jerry, and thank ye."

"Good night, Peg."

He bent down and kissed her hand reverently.

At the same moment the sound of a high-power automobile was heard in the near distance. The brakes were put on and the car came to a stand-still. Then the sound of footsteps was heard distinctly coming toward the windows.

"Take care," cried Jerry. "Go in. Someone is coming."

Peg hurried in and hid just inside the windows and heard every word that followed.

As Peg disappeared Jerry walked down the path to meet the visitor. He came face to face with Christian Brent.

"Hello, Brent," he said in surprise.

"Why, what in the world —?" cried that astonished gentleman.

"The house is asleep," said Jerry, explanatorily.

"So I see," and Brent glanced up at the darkened

windows. There was a moment's pause. Then out of the embarrassing silence Jerry remarked:

"Just coming from the dance? I didn't see you there."

"No," replied the uncomfortable Brent. "I was restless and just strolled here."

"Oh! Let us go on to the road."

"Right," said the other man, and they walked on.

Before they had gone a few steps Jerry stopped abruptly. Right in front of him at the gate was a forty-horse-power "*Mercedes*" automobile.

"*Strolled* here? Why, you have your car!" said Jerry.

"Yes," replied Brent hurriedly. "It's a bright night for a spin."

The two men went on out of hearing.

CHAPTER X

PEG INTERVENES

Peg listened until she heard the faint sounds in the distance of the automobile being started — then silence.

She crept softly upstairs. Just as she reached the top Ethel appeared from behind the curtains on her way down to the room. She was fully dressed and carried a small travelling bag.

Peg looked at her in amazement.

"Ethel!" she said in a hoarse whisper.

"You!" cried Ethel, under her breath and glaring at Peg furiously.

"Please don't tell anyone ye've seen me!" begged Peg.

"Go down into the room!" Ethel ordered.

Peg went down the stairs into the dark room, lit only by the stream of moonlight coming in through the windows at the back. Ethel followed her:

"What are you doing here?"

"I've been to the dance. Oh, ye won't tell me aunt, will ye? She'd send me away an' I don't want to go now, indade I don't."

"To the dance?" repeated Ethel, incredulously. Try as she would she could not rid herself of the feeling that Peg was there to watch her.

"To the *dance?*" she asked again.

"Yes. Mr. Jerry took me."

"*Jerry* took you?"

"Yer mother wouldn't let me go. So Jerry came back

for me when ye were all in bed and he took me himself. And I enjoyed it so much. An' I don't want yer mother to know about it. Ye won't tell her, will ye?"

"I shall most certainly see that my mother knows of it."

"Ye will?" cried poor, broken-hearted Peg.

"I shall. You had no right to go."

"Why are ye so hard on me, Ethel?"

"Because I detest you."

"I'm sorry," said Peg simply. "Ye've spoiled all me pleasure now. Good night, Ethel."

Sore at heart and thoroughly unhappy, poor Peg turned away from Ethel and began to climb the stairs. When she was about half-way up a thought flashed across her. She came back quickly into the room and went straight across to Ethel.

"And what are *you* doin' here — at this time o' night? An' dressed like *that?* An' with that *bag?* What does it mane? Where are ye goin'?"

"Go to your room!" said Ethel, livid with anger, and trying to keep her voice down and to hush Peg in case her family were awakened.

"Do you mean to say you were going with —"

Ethel covered Peg's mouth with her hand.

"Keep down your voice, you little fool!"

Peg freed herself. *Her* temper was up, too. The thought of *why* Ethel was there was uppermost in her mind as she cried:

"*He* was here a minnit ago an' Mr. Jerry took him away."

"*He?*" said Ethel, frightenedly.

"*Mr. Brent,*" answered Peg.

Ethel went quickly to the windows. Peg sprang in front of her and caught her by the wrists.

"Were ye goin' away with *him?* Were ye?"

"Take your hands off me."

"Were ye goin' away with him? Answer me?" insisted Peg.

"Yes," replied Ethel vehemently. "And I *am.*"

"No ye're not," said the indomitable Peg holding her firmly by the wrist.

"Let me go!" whispered Ethel, struggling to release herself.

"Ye're not goin' out o' this house to-night if I have to wake everyone in it."

"Wake them!" cried Ethel. "Wake them. They couldn't stop me. Nothing can stop me now. I'm sick of this living on *charity;* sick of meeting *you* day by day, an implied insult in your every look and word, as much as to say: '*I'm* giving you your daily bread; *I'm* keeping the roof over you!' I'm sick of it. And I end it to-night. Let me go or I'll — I'll —" and she tried in vain to release herself from Peg's grip.

Peg held her resolutely:

"What d'ye mane by *insult?* An' yer *daily bread?* An' kapin' the roof over ye? What are ye ravin' about at all?"

"I'm at the end — to-night. I'm going!" and she struggled with Peg up to the windows. But Peg did not loose her hold. It was firmer than before.

"You're not goin' away with him, I tell ye. Ye're *not.* What d'ye suppose ye'd be goin' to? I'll tell ye. A wakin' an' sleepin' *hell* — that's what it would be."

"I'm going," said the distracted girl.

"Ye'd take him from his wife an' her baby?"

"He hates *them!* and I hate *this!* I tell you I'm going —"

"So ye'd break yer mother's heart an' his wife's just to

satisfy yer own selfish pleasure? Well I'm glad *I* sinned to-night in doin' what I wanted to do since it's given me the chance to save *you* from doin' the most shameful thing a woman ever did!"

"Will you —" and Ethel again struggled to get free.

"*You'll* stay here and *he'll* go back to his home if I have to tell everyone and disgrace yez both."

Ethel cowered down frightenedly.

"No! No! You must not do that! You must not do that!" she cried, terror-stricken.

"Ye just told me yer own mother couldn't stop ye?" said Peg.

"My mother mustn't know. She mustn't know. Let me go. He is waiting — and it is past the time —"

"Let him wait!" replied Peg firmly. "He gave his name an' life to a woman an' it's yer duty to protect her an' the child she brought him."

"I'd kill myself first!" answered Ethel through her clenched teeth.

"No, ye won't. Ye won't kill yerself at all. Ye might have if ye'd gone with him. Why that's the kind of man that tires of ye in an hour and laves ye to sorrow alone. Doesn't he want to have the woman now that he swore to cherish at the altar of God? What do ye suppose he'd do to one he took no oath with at all? Now have some sense about it. I know him and his kind very well. Especially *him*. An' sure it's no compliment he's payin' ye ayther. Faith, he'd ha' made love to *me* if I'd let him."

"What? To *you?*" cried Ethel in astonishment.

"Yes, to *me*. Here in this room to-day. If ye had come in when ye did, I'd ha' taught him a lesson he'd have carried to his grave, so I would!"

"He tried to make love to you?" repeated Ethel in

credulously, though a chill came at her heart as she half realised the truth of Peg's accusation.

"Ever since I've been in this house," replied Peg. "An' to-day he comes toward me with his arms stretched out. 'Kiss an' be friends!' sez he — an' in *you* walked."

"Is that true?" asked Ethel.

"On me poor mother's memory it is, Ethel," replied Peg.

Ethel sank down into a chair and covered her eyes.

"The wretch!" she wailed, "the wretch!"

"That's what he is," said Peg. "An' ye'd give yer life into his kapin' to blacken so that no dacent man or woman would ever look at ye or spake to ye again."

"No! That is over! That is over!"

All the self-abasement of consenting to, or even considering going with, such a creature as Brent now came uppermost. She was disgusted through and through to her soul. Suddenly she broke down and tears for the first time within her remembrance came to her. She sobbed and sobbed as she had not done since she was a child.

"I hate myself," she cried between her sobs. "Oh, how I hate myself."

Peg was all pity in a moment. She took the little travelling bag away from Ethel and put it on the table. Then with her own hands she staunched Ethel's tears and tried to quiet her.

"Ethel acushla! Don't do that! Darlin'! Don't! He's not worth it. Kape yer life an' yer heart clane until the one man in all the wurrld comes to ye with *his* heart pure too, and then ye'll know what rale happiness means."

She knelt down beside the sobbing girl and took Ethel in her arms, and tried to comfort her.

"Sure, then, cry dear, and wash away all the sins of

this night. It's the salt of yer tears that'll cleanse yer heart an' fall like Holy Wather on yer sowl. Ssh! There! There! That's enough now. Stop now an' go back to yer room, an' slape until mornin', an' with the sunlight the last thought of all this will go from ye. Ssh! There now! Don't! An' not a wurrd o' what's happened here to-night will cross my lips."

She helped her cousin up and supported her. Ethel was on the point of fainting, and her body was trembling with the convulsive force of her half-suppressed sobs.

"Come to *my* room," said Peg in a whisper, as she helped Ethel over to the stairs. "I'll watch by yer side till mornin'. Lane on me. That's right. Put yer weight on me."

She picked up the travelling-bag and together the two girls began to ascend the stairs.

Ethel gave a low choking moan.

"Don't, dear, ye'll wake up the house," cried Peg anxiously. "We've only a little way to go. Aisy now. Not a sound! Ssh, dear! Not a morsel o' noise."

Just as the two girls reached the landing, Peg in her anxiety stepped short, missed the top step, lost her footing and fell the entire length of the staircase into the room, smashing a tall china flower-vase that was reposing on the post at the foot of the stairs.

The two girls were too stunned for a moment to move.

The worst thing that could possibly have happened was just what *did* happen.

There would be all kinds of questions and explanations.

Peg instantly made up her mind that they were not going to know why Ethel was there.

Ethel must be saved and at any cost.

She sprang to her feet.

"Holy Mother!" she cried, "the whole house'll be awake! Give me yer hat! Quick! An' yer cloak! An' yer bag!" Peg began quickly to put on Ethel's hat and cloak. Her own she flung out of sight beneath the great oak table.

"Now remember," she dictated, "ye came here because ye heard me. Ye weren't goin' out o' the house at all. Ye just heard me movin' about in here. Stick to that."

The sound of voices in the distance broke in on them.

"They're comin'," said Peg, anxiously. "Remember ye're here because ye heard *me*. An' ye were talkin'— an'— I'll do the rest. Though what in the wurrld I am *goin'* to say and do I don't know at all. Only *you* were not goin' out o' this house! That's one thing we've got to stick to. Give me the bag."

Wearing Ethel's hat and cloak and with Ethel's travelling-bag in her hand, staunch little Peg turned to meet the disturbed family, with no thought of herself, just the one abiding resolution to, at any and at all costs, save her cousin Ethel from disgrace.

CHAPTER XI

"THE REBELLION OF PEG"

"TAKE care, mater — keep back. Let me deal with them." And Alaric with an electric flash-light appeared at the head of the stairs, followed by his mother holding a night-lamp high over her head and peering down into the dark room.

"It was from here that the sound came, dear," she said to Alaric.

"Stay up there," replied the valiant youth: "I'll soon find out what's up."

As Alaric reached the bottom of the stairs, the door just by the staircase opened noiselessly and a large body protruded into the room covered in an equally gigantic bath robe. As the face came stealthily through the doorway, Alaric made one leap and caught the invader by the throat.

A small, frightened voice cried out:

"Please don't do that, sir. It's only me!"

Alaric flashed the electric-light in the man's face and found it was the unfortunate Jarvis.

"What are you doing here?" asked Alaric.

"I heard a disturbance of some kind and came down after it, sir," replied Jarvis, nervously.

"Guard that door then! and let no one pass. If there is any one trespassing in here I want to find 'em."

He began a systematic search of the room until suddenly the reflector from the flash-light shone full on the two girls.

Ethel was sitting back fainting in a chair, clinging to Peg, who was standing beside her trembling.

"*Ethel!*" cried Alaric in amazement.

"*Margaret!*" said Mrs. Chichester in anger.

"Well, I mean to say," ejaculated the astounded young man as he walked across to the switch and flooded the room with light.

"That will do," ordered Mrs. Chichester, dismissing the equally astonished footman, who passed out, curiosity in every feature.

"What are you two girls playin' at?" demanded Alaric.

"What does this mean?" asked Mrs. Chichester severely.

"Sure, Ethel heard me here," answered Peg, "an' she came in, an'—"

"What were you doing here?"

"I was goin' out an' Ethel heard me an' came in an' stopped me — an'—"

"Where were you going?" persisted the old lady.

"Just out — out there —" and Peg pointed to the open windows.

Mrs. Chichester had been examining Peg minutely. She suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, that is Ethel's cloak."

"Sure it is," replied Peg, "and this is her hat I've got an' here's her bag —" Peg was striving her utmost to divert Mrs. Chichester's attention from Ethel, who was in so tense and nervous a condition that it seemed as if she might faint at any moment. She thrust the dressing-bag into the old lady's hand. Mrs. Chichester opened it immediately and found just inside it Ethel's jewel-box. She took it out and held it up accusingly before Peg's eyes: "Her jewel-box! Where did you get this?"

"I took it," said Peg promptly.

"Took it?"

"Yes, aunt, I took it!"

Mrs. Chichester opened the box: it was full. Every jewel that Ethel owned was in it.

"Her jewels! Ethel's jewels?"

"Yes — I took them too."

"You were *stealing* them?"

"No. I wasn't *stealing* them,— I just *took* 'em!"

"*Why* did you take them?"

"I wanted — to *wear* them," answered Peg readily.

"*Wear* them?"

"Yes — *wear them.*" Suddenly Peg saw a way of escape, and she jumped quickly at it. "I wanted to wear them *at the dance.*"

"*What* dance?" demanded Mrs. Chichester, growing more suspicious every moment.

"Over there — in the Assembly Rooms. To-night. I went over there, an' I danced. An' when I came back I made a noise, an' Ethel heard me, an' she threw on some clothes, an' she came in here to see who it was, an' it was *me*, an' were both goin' up to bed when I slipped an' fell down the stairs, an' some noisy thing fell down with me — an' that's all."

Peg paused for want of breath. Ethel clung to her. Mrs. Chichester, not by any means satisfied with the explanation, was about to prosecute her inquiries further when Alaric called out from the window:

"There's some one prowling in the garden. He's on the path! He's coming here. Don't be frightened, mater. I'll deal with him." And he boldly went up the steps leading into the alcove to meet the marauder.

Ethel half rose from the chair and whispered: "Mr. Brent!"

Peg pressed her back into the chair and turned toward the windows.

On came the footsteps nearer and nearer until they were heard to be mounting the steps from the garden into the alcove.

Alaric pushed his electric light full into the visitor's face, and fell back.

"Good Lord! Jerry!" he ejaculated, completely astonished. "I say, ye know," he went on, "what is happening in this house to-night?"

Jerry came straight down to Mrs. Chichester.

"I saw your lights go up and I came here on the run. I guessed something like this had happened. Don't be hard on your niece, Mrs. Chichester. The whole thing was entirely my fault. I asked her to go."

Mrs. Chichester looked at him stonily.

"You took my niece to a dance in spite of my absolute refusal to allow her to go?"

"He had nothin' to do with it," said Peg, "I took *him* to that dance." She wasn't going to allow Jerry to be abused without lodging a protest. After all it was her fault. She *made* him take her. Very well — she would take the blame.

Mrs. Chichester looked steadily at Jerry for a few moments before she spoke. When she did speak her voice was cold and hard and accusatory.

"Surely, Sir Gerald Adair knows better than to take a girl of eighteen to a public ball without her relations' sanction?"

"I thought only of the pleasure it would give her," he answered. "Please accept my sincerest apologies."

Peg looked at him in wonder:

"Sir Gerald Adair! Are *you* Sir Gerald Adair?"

"Yes, Peg."

"So ye have a title, have yez?"

He did not answer.

Peg felt somehow that she had been cheated. Why had he not told her? Why did he let her play and romp and joke and banter with him as though they had been children and equals? It wasn't fair! He was just laughing at her! Just laughing at her! All her spirit was in quick revolt.

"Do you realise what you have done?" broke in Mrs. Chichester.

"I'm just beginning to," replied Peg bitterly.

"I am ashamed of you! You have disgraced us all!" cried Mrs. Chichester.

"Have I?" screamed Peg fiercely. "Well, if I *have* then I am goin' back to some one who'd never be ashamed o' me, no matter what I did. Here I've never been allowed to do one thing I've wanted to. *He* lets me do *everything* I want because he loves and trusts me an' whatever I do is *right* because *I* do it. I've disgraced ye, have I? Well, none of you can tell me the truth. I'm goin' back to me father."

"Go back to your father and glad we are to be rid of you!" answered Mrs. Chichester furiously.

"I am goin' back to him —"

Before she could say anything further, Ethel suddenly rose unsteadily and cried out:

"Wait, mother! She mustn't go. We have all been grossly unfair to her. It is *I* should go. To-night she saved me from — she saved me from —" suddenly Ethel reached the breaking-point; she slipped from Peg's arms to the chair and on to the floor and lay quite still.

Peg knelt down beside her:

"She's fainted. Stand back — give her air — get

some water, some smelling-salts — quick — don't stand there lookin' at her: do somethin'!"

Peg loosened Ethel's dress and talked to her all the while, and Jerry and Alaric hurried out in different directions in quest of restoratives.

Mrs. Chichester came toward Ethel, thoroughly alarmed and upset.

But Peg would not let her touch the inanimate girl.

"Go away from her!" cried Peg hysterically. "What good do ye think ye can do her? What do you know about her? You don't know anything about yer children — ye don't know how to raise them. Ye don't know a thought in yer child's mind. Why don't ye sit down beside her sometimes and find out what she thinks and who she sees? Take her hand in yer own and get her to open her soul to ye! Be a mother to her! A lot you know about motherhood! I want to tell ye me father knows more about motherhood than any man in the wurrld."

Poor Mrs. Chichester fell back, crushed and humiliated from Peg's onslaught.

In a few moments the two men returned with water and salts. After a while Ethel opened her eyes and looked up at Peg. Peg, fearful lest she should begin to accuse herself again, helped her up the stairs to her own room and there she sat beside the unstrung, hysterical girl until she slept, her hand locked in both of Peg's.

Promising to call in the morning, Jerry left.

The mother and son returned to their rooms.

The house was still again.

But how much had happened that night that went to shaping the characters and lives of these two young girls, who were first looking out at life with the eyes and minds of swiftly advancing womanhood!

One thing Peg had resolved: she would not spend another night in the Chichester home.

Her little heart was bruised and sore. The night had begun so happily: it had ended so wretchedly.

And to think the one person in whom she trusted had been just amusing himself with her, leading her to believe he was a farmer—"less than that" he had once said, and all the time he was a man of breeding and of birth and of title.

Poor Peg felt so humiliated that she made up her mind she would never see him again.

In the morning she would go back to the one real affection of her life -- to the man who never hurt or disappointed her — her father.

CHAPTER XII

A ROOM IN NEW YORK

We will now leave Peg for a while and return to one who claimed so much of the reader's attention in the early pages of this history — O'Connell.

It had not been a happy month for him.

He felt the separation from Peg keenly. At first he was almost inconsolable. He lived in constant dread of hearing that some untoward accident had befallen her. All the days and nights of that journey of Peg's to England, O'Connell had the ever-present premonition of danger. When a cable came, signed 'Montgomery Hawkes,' acquainting O'Connell with the news of Peg's safe arrival, he drew a long breath of relief.

Then the days passed slowly until Peg's first letter came. It contained the news of Kingsnorth's death — Peg's entrance into the Chichester family, her discontent — her longing to be back once more in New York. This was followed by more letters all more or less in the same key. Finally he wrote urging her to give it all up and come back to him. He would not have his little daughter tortured for all the advantages those people could give her. Then her letters took on a different aspect. They contained a curious half-note of happiness in them. No more mention of returning. On the contrary, Peg appeared to be making the best of the conditions in which she was placed.

These later letters set O'Connell wondering. Had the great Message of Life come to his little Peg?

Although he always felt it *would* come some day, now

that it seemed almost a very real possibility, he dreaded it. There were so few natures would understand her.

Beneath all her resolute and warlike exterior, it would take a keenly observing eye to find the real, gentle, affectionate nature that flourished in the sunshine of affection, and would fret and pine amid unsympathetic surroundings.

That Peg was developing her character and her nature during those few weeks was clear to O'Connell. The whole tone of her letters had changed. But no word of hers gave him any clue to the real state of her feelings, until one day he received a letter almost entirely composed of descriptions of the appearance, mode of speech, method of thought and expression of one "Jerry." The description of the man appealed to him, he apparently having so many things in common with the mysterious person who had so vividly impressed himself on Peg. Apparently Peg was half trying to improve herself. There was a distinct note of seriousness about the last letter. It was drawing near the end of the month and she was going to ask her aunt to let her stay on for *another* month if her father did not mind. She did not want him to be unhappy, and if he was miserable without her, why she would sail back to New York on the very first steamer. He wrote her a long affectionate letter, telling her that whatever made her happy would make *him*, too, and that she must not, on any account, think of returning to New York if she found that she was helping her future by staying with her aunt. All through the letter he kept up apparent high spirits, and ended it with a cheery exhortation to stay away from him just as long as she could; not to think of returning until it was absolutely necessary.

It was with a heavy heart he posted that letter. Back

of his brain he had hoped all through that month that Peg would refuse to stay any longer in England.

Her determination to stay was a severe blow to him.

He lived entirely alone in the same rooms he had with Peg when she was summoned abroad.

He was preparing, in his spare time, a history of the Irish movement from twenty years before down to the present day. It was fascinating work for him, embodying as it did all he had ever felt and thought or done for the "Great Cause."

In addition to this work — that occupied so many of his free hours — he would give an occasional lecture on Irish conditions or take part as adviser in some Irish pageant. He became rapidly one of the best liked and most respected of the thoughtful, active, executive Irishmen in New York City.

The night of the day following the incidents in the preceding chapter — incidents that determined Peg's future — O'Connell was sitting in his little work room, surrounded by books of reference, and loose sheets of manuscript, developing his great work — the real work of his life — because in it he would incorporate everything that would further the march of advancement in Ireland — to work and thought and government by her people.

A ring at the bell caused O'Connell to look up frowningly. He was not in the habit of receiving calls. Few people ever dared to intrude on his privacy. He preferred to be alone with his work. It passed the time of separation from Peg quicker than in any other way.

He opened the door and looked in amazement at his visitor. He saw a little, round, merry-looking, bald-headed gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles, an enormous silk-hat, broad cloth frock-coat suit, patent boots with grey spats on them, and a general air of prosperity

and good nature that impressed itself on even the most casual observer.

"Is that Frank O'Connell?" cried the little man.

"It is," said O'Connell, trying in vain to see the man's features distinctly in the dim light. There was a familiar ring in his voice that seemed to take O'Connell back many years.

"You're not tellin' me ye've forgotten me?" asked the little man, reproachfully.

"Come into the light and let me see the face of ye. Yer voice sounds familiar to me, I'm thinkin'," replied O'Connell.

The little man came into the room, took off his heavy silk-hat and looked up at O'Connell with a quizzing look in his laughing eyes.

"McGinnis!" was all the astonished agitator could say.

"That's who it is! 'Talkative McGinnis,' come all the way from ould Ireland to take ye by the hand."

The two men shook hands warmly and in a few moments O'Connell had the little doctor in the most comfortable seat in the room, a cigar between his lips and a glass of whiskey-and-water at his elbow.

"An' what in the wurrld brings ye here, docthor?" asked O'Connell.

"Didn't ye hear?"

"I've heard nothin', I'm tellin' ye."

"Ye didn't hear of me old grand-uncle, McNamara of County Sligo dyin'— after a useless life — and doin' the only thing that made me proud of him now that he's gone — may he slape in peace — lavin' the money he'd kept such a close fist on all his life to his God-fearin' nephew so that he can spind the rest of his days in comfort? Didn't ye hear that?"

"I did not. And who was the nephew that came into it?"

"Meself, Frank O'Connell!"

"You! Is it the truth ye're tellin' me?"

"May I nivver spake another wurrd if I'm not."

O'Connell took the little man's hand and shook it until the doctor screamed out to him to let it go.

"What are ye doin' at all — crushin' the feelin' out of me? Sure that's no way to show yer appreciation," and McGinnis held the crushed hand to the side of his face in pain.

"It's sorry I am if I hurt ye and it's glad I am at the cause. So it's a wealthy man ye are now, docthor, eh?"

"Middlin' wealthy."

"And what are ye doin' in New York?"

"Sure this is the counthry to take money to. It doubles itself out here over night, they tell me."

"Yer takin' it away from the land of yer birth?"

"That's what I'm doin' — until I make it into enough where I can go back and do some good. It's tired I am of blood-lettin', and patchin' up the sick and ailin', fevers an' all. I've got a few years left to enjoy meself — an' I'm seventy come November — an' I mane to do it."

"How did ye find me?"

"Who should I meet in the sthreet this mornin'— an' me here a week — but Patrick Kinsella, big as a house and his face all covered in whiskers — him that I took into me own home the night they cracked his skull up beyant the hill when O'Brien came to talk to us.

"'What are yer doin' here at all?' sez I. 'Faith, it's the foine thing I'm in,' sez he. 'An' what is it?' sez I. 'Politics!' sez he, with a knowin' grin. 'Politics is it?' I asks, all innocent as a baby. 'That's what I'm doin',' sez he. 'An' I want to tell ye the Irish are wastin' their

time worryin' their heads over their own country when here's a great foine beautiful rich one over here just ripe, an' waitin' to be plucked. What wud we be doin' tryin' to run Ireland when we can run America. Answer me that,' sez he. 'Run America?' sez I, all dazed. 'That's what the Irish are doin' this minnit. Ye'd betther get on in while the goin's good. It's a wondherful melon the Irish are goin' to cut out here one o' these fine days,' an' he gave me a knowin' grin, shouted to me where he was to be found and away he wint.

"There's many a backslider from the 'Cause' out here, I'm thinkin'," continued the doctor.

"If it's me ye mane, ye're wrong. I'm no backslider."

"Kinsella towld me where to find ye. Sure it's many's the long day since ye lay on yer back in 'The Gap' with yer hide full o' lead, and ye cursin' the English government. Ye think different now maybe to what ye did then?"

"Sure I think different. Other times, other ways. But if it hadn't been for the methods of twenty years ago we wouldn't be doin' things so peaceably now. It was the attitude of Irishmen in Ireland that made them legislate for us. It wasn't the Irish members in Westminster that did it."

"That's thrue for ye."

"It was the pluck — and determination — and statesmanship — and unflinchin' not-to-be-quieted or deterred attitude of them days that's brought the goal we've all been aimin' at in sight. An' it's a happier an' more contented an' healthier an' cleaner Ireland we're seein' to-day than the wan we had to face as childhren."

"Thrue for ye agen. I see ye've not lost the gift o' the gab. Ye've got it with ye still, Frank O'Connell."

"Faith an' while I'm talkin' of the one thing in the

wurrld that's near our hearts — the future of Ireland — I want to *prophesy* —"

"*Prophesy* is it?"

"That's what I want to do."

"An' what's it ye'd be afther prophesying?"

"This: that ten years from now, with her own Government, with her own language back again — Gaelic — an' what language in the wurrld yields greater music than the old Gaelic? — with Ireland united and Ireland's land in the care of *Irishmen:* with Ireland's people self-respectin' an' sober an' healthy an' educated: with Irishmen employed on Irish industries, exportin' them all over the wurrld: with Ireland's heart beatin' with hope an' faith in the future — do ye know what will happen?"

"Go on, Frank O'Connell. I love to listen to ye. Don't stop."

"I'll tell ye what will happen! Back will go the Irishmen in tens o' thousands from all the other counthries they were dhriven to in the days o' famine an' oppression an' coercion an' buck-shot — back they will go to their mother counthry. An' can ye see far enough into the future to realise what *that* will do? Ye can't. Well, I'll tell ye that, too. The exiled Irish, who have lived their lives abroad — takin' their wives, like as not, from the people o' the counthry they lived in an' not from their own stock — when they go back to Ireland with different outlooks, with different manners an' with different tastes, so long as they've kept the hearts o' them thrue an' loyal — just so long as they've done that — an' kept the Faith o' their forefathers — they'll form a new *Nation,* an' a *Nation* with all the best o' the old — the great big Faith an' Hope o' the old — added to the prosperity an' education an' business-

like principles an' statesmanship o' the *New* — an' it's the *blood* o' the great *Old* an' the *power* o' the great *New* that'll make the Ireland o' the future one o' the greatest *Nations* in *Peace* as she has always been in *War*."

O'Connell's voice died away as he looked out across the years to come. And the light of prophecy shone in his eyes, and the eerie tone of the seer was in his voice.

It was the Ireland he had dreamed of! Ireland free, prosperous, contented — happy. Ireland speaking and writing in her national tongue! Ireland with all the depth of the poetic nature of the peasant equal to the peer! Ireland handling her own resources, developing her own national character, responsible before the *World* and not to an alien nation for her acts — an Ireland triumphant.

Even if he would not live to see the golden harvest ripen he felt proud to be one of those who helped, in the days of stress that were gone, her people, to the benefiting of the future generations, who would have a legacy of development by *pacific* measures, what he and his forefathers strove to accomplish by the loss of their liberty and the shedding of their blood.

"Sure it's the big position they should give you on College Green when they get their own government again, Frank O'Connell," the little doctor said, shaking his head knowingly.

"The race has been everythin' to me: the prize — if there's one —'ud be nothin'. A roof to me head and a bite to eat is all I need by day — so long as the little girl is cared for."

"An' where is the little blue-eyed maiden? Peg o' your heart? Where is she at all?"

"It's in London she is."

"London!"

"Aye. She's with an aunt o' hers bein' educated an' the like."

"Is it *English* ye're goin' to bring her up?" cried the doctor in horror and disgust.

"No, it's not, Docthor McGinnis — an' ye ought to know me betther than to sit there an' ask me such a question. Bring her up English? when the one regret o' me life is I never knew enough Gaelic to tache her the language so that we'd be free of the English speech anyway. Bring her up English! I never heard the like o' that in me life."

"Then what is she doin' there at all?"

"Now listen, McGinnis, and listen well — an' then ye'll never ask such a question again. When the good Lord calls me to Himself it's little enough I'll have to lave me little Peg. An' that thought has been throublin' me these years past. I'm not the kind that makes money easily or that kapes the little I earn. An' the chance came to give Peg advantages I could never give her. Her mother's people offered to take her and it's with them she has been this last month. But with all their breedin' an' their fine manners and soft speech they've not changed Peg — not changed her in the least. Her letthers to me are just as sweet an' simple as if she were standin' there talkin' to me. An' I wish she were standin' here — now — this minnit," and his eyes filled up and he turned away.

McGinnis jumped up quickly and turned the tall, bronzed man around with a hand on each shoulder — though he had to stand tip-toe to do it, and poured forth his feelings as follows:

"Send for her! Bring her back to ye! Why man, yer heart is heavy without her; aye, just as yer *hair* is goin' grey, so is yer *life* without the one thing in it that kapes it warm and bright. Send for

her! Don't let the Saxons get hold of her with their flattherin' ways and their insincerities, an' all. Bring her back to ye and kape her with ye until the right man comes along — an' he must be an Irishman — straight of limb an' of character — with the joy of livin' in his heart and the love of yer little girl first to him in the wurrld, an' then ye'll know ye've done the right thing by her; for it's the only happiness yer Peg'll ever know — to be an Irish wife an' an Irish mother as well as an Irish daughther. Send for her — I'm tellin' ye, Frank O'Connell, or it's the sore rod ye'll be makin' for yer own back."

McGinnis's words sank in.

When they parted for the night with many promises to meet again ere long, O'Connell sat down and wrote Peg a long letter, leaving the choice in her hands, but telling her how much he would like to have her back with him. He wrote the letter again and again and each time destroyed it. It seemed so clumsy.

It was so hard to express just what he felt. He decided to leave it until morning.

All that night he tossed about in feverish unrest. He could not sleep. He had a feeling of impending calamity.

Toward dawn he woke, and lighting a lamp wrote out a cable message:

Miss Margaret O'Connell
c/o Mrs. Chichester
Regal Villa, Scarboro, England
Please come back to me. I want you. Love from
YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

Relieved in his mind, he put the message on the table, intending to send it on his way to business.

Then he slept until breakfast-time without a dream.

His Peg would get the message and she would come to him.

At breakfast a cable was brought to him.

He opened it and looked in bewilderment at the contents:

"Sailing to-day for New York on White Star boat *Celtic*. Love. PEG."

CHAPTER XIII

THE MORNING AFTER

The morning after the incident following Peg's disobedience in going to the dance, and her subsequent rebellion and declaration of independence, found all the inmates of Regal Villa in a most unsettled condition.

Peg had,— as was indicated in a preceding chapter — remained by Ethel's side until morning, when, seeing that her cousin was sleeping peacefully, she had gone to her own room to prepare for her leaving.

One thing she was positive about — she would take nothing out of that house she did not bring into it — even to a heartache.

She entered the family a month before sore at heart — well, she was leaving it in a like condition.

Whilst she was making her few little preparations, Mrs. Chichester was reviewing the whole situation in her room. She was compelled to admit, however outraged her feelings may have been the previous night, that should Peg carry out her intention to desert them, the family would be in a parlous condition. The income from Mr. Kingsnorth's will was indeed the one note of relief to the distressed household. She had passed a wretched night, and after a cup of tea in her room, and a good long period of reflection, she decided to seek the aid of the head of the family — her son.

She found him in the morning-room lying full length on a lounge reading the "*Post.*"

He jumped up directly he saw her, led her over to the

lounge, kissed her, put her down gently beside him and asked her how she was feeling.

"I didn't close my eyes all night," answered the unhappy old lady.

"Isn't that rotten?" said Alaric sympathetically. "I was a bit plungy myself — first one side and then the other." And he yawned and stretched languidly. "Hate to have one's night's rest broken," he concluded.

Mrs. Chichester looked at him sadly.

"What is to be done?" she asked, despair in every note.

"We must get in forty winks during the day some time," he replied, encouragingly.

"No, no, Alaric. I mean about *Margaret?*"

"Oh! The imp? Nothin' that I can see. She's got it into her stubborn little head that she's had enough of us, and that's the end of it!"

"And the end of our income," summed up Mrs. Chichester, pathetically.

"Well, you were a bit rough on her, mater. Now, I come to think of it we've all been a bit rough on her — except *me*. I've made her laugh once or twice — poor little soul. After all, suppose she *did* want to dance? What's the use of fussing? *Let* her, *I* say. *Let* her. Better *she* should dance and *stay*, than for *us* to starve if she *goes*."

"Don't reproach me, dear. I did my duty. How could I consent to her going? A girl of her age!"

"Girl! Why, they're grown women with families in America at her age."

"Thank God they're not in England."

"They will be some day, mater. They're kickin' over the traces more and more every day. Watch 'em in a year or two, I say, *watch* 'em. One time women kept

on the pavement. Now they're out in the middle of the road — and in thousands! Mark me! What ho!"

"*They* are not *women!*" ejaculated Mrs. Chichester severely.

"Oh, bless me, yes. They're *women* all right. I've met 'em. Listened to 'em talk. Some of 'em were *rippers*. Why, there was one girl I really have rather a fash on. Great big girl she is with a deep voice. She had me all quivery for a while." And his mind ran back over his "*Militant*" past and present.

"Just when I had begun to have some hope of her!" Alaric started.

"I didn't know you met her. Do you know Marjory Fairbanks?"

"No," replied Mrs. Chichester, almost sharply: "I mean Margaret."

"Oh! The little devil? Did ye? I never did. Not a hope! I've always felt she ought to have the inscription on dear old Shakespeare's grave waving in front of her all the time — 'Good friend, for Heaven's sake forbear.' There's no hope for her, mater. Believe *me*."

"I thought that perhaps under *our* influence — in *time* —"

"Don't you think it. She will always be a Peter Pan. Never grow up. She'd play elfish tricks if she had a nursery full of infants."

"But," persisted the old lady, "some *good* man — one day might change that."

"Ah! But where *is* he? Good men who'd take a girl like that in hand are very scarce, mater — very scarce indeed. Oh, no. Back she goes to America to-day, and off *I* go to-morrow to work. Must hold the roof up, mater, and pacify the tradesmen. I've given up the *doctor* idea — takes too long to make anything. And it's

not altogether a *nice* way to earn your living. No; on the whole, I think — *Canada*. . . ."

Mrs. Chichester rose in alarm:

"Canada! my boy!"

"Nice big place — plenty of room. We're all so crowded together here in England. All the professions are chock-full with people *waitin'* to squeeze in somewhere.

"Give me the new big countries! England is too old and small. A fellow with *my* temperament can hardly turn round and take a full breath in an island our size. Out there, with millions of acres to choose from, I'll just squat down on a thousand or so, raise cattle, and in a year or two I'll be quite independent. Then back I'll come here and invest it. See?"

"Don't go away from me, Alaric. I couldn't bear that."

"All right — if you say so, mater. But it does seem a shame to let all that good land go to waste when it can be had for the asking.

"Well, I'll wander round the fields for a bit, and thrash it all out. 'Stonishing how clear a fellow's head gets in the open air. Don't you worry, mater — I'll beat the whole thing out by myself."

He patted the old lady gently on the shoulder, and humming a music-hall ballad cheerfully, started off into the garden. He had only gone a few steps when his mother called to him. He stopped. She joined him excitedly.

"Oh, Alaric! There is a *way* — one way that would save us." And she trembled as she paused, as if afraid to tell him what the alternative was.

"Is there, mater? What is it?"

"It rests with *you*, dear."

"*Does* it? Very good. I'll do it."

"Will you?"

"Honour bright, I will."

"Whatever it is?"

"To save you and Ethel and the *roof*, 'course I will. Now you've got me all strung up. Let me hear it."

She drew him into a little arbour in the rose-garden out of sight and hearing of the open windows.

"Alaric?" she asked, in a tone that suggested their fate hung on his answer: "Alaric! Do you *like* her?"

"Like whom?"

"Margaret! *Do* you?"

"Here and there. She amuses me like anything at times. She drew a map of Europe once that I think was the most fearful and wonderful thing I have ever seen. She said it was the way her father would like to see Europe. She had England, Scotland and Wales in *Germany*, and the rest of the map was *Ireland*. Made me laugh like anything." And he chuckled at the remembrance.

Suddenly Mrs. Chichester placed both of her hands on his shoulders and with tears in her eyes exclaimed:

"Oh! my boy! Alaric! My son!"

"Hello!" cried the astonished youth. "What is it? You're not goin' to cry, are ye?"

She was already weeping copiously as she gasped between her sobs:

"Oh! If you only *could*."

"*Could? What?*"

"Take that little wayward child into your life and mould her."

"Here, one moment, mater: let me get the full force of your idea. You want *me* to *mould Margaret?*"

"Yes, dear."

"Ha!" he laughed uneasily. Then said decidedly: "No, mater, no. I can do most things, but as a *moulder* — oh, no. Let Ethel do it — if she'll *stay*, that is."

"Alaric, my dear — I mean to take her *really* into your life — 'to *have* and to *hold*.'" And she looked pleadingly at him through her tear-dimmed eyes.

"But, I don't want to hold her, mater!" reasoned her son.

"It would be the saving of her," urged the old lady.

"That's all very well, but what about *me?*"

"It would be the saving of us all!" she insisted significantly.

But Alaric was still obtuse.

"Now, how would my *holding* and *moulding* Margaret save *us?*"

The old lady placed her cards deliberately on the table as she said sententiously:

"She would stay with us *here — if you were — engaged to her!*"

The shock had come. His mother's terrible alternative was now before him in all its naked horror. A shiver ran through him. The thought of a man, with a future as brilliant as his, being blighted at the outset by *such* a mésalliance.

He felt the colour leave his face.

He knew he was ghastly pale.

The little arbour seemed to close in on him and stifle him.

He could scarcely breathe.

He murmured, his eyes half closed, as if picturing some vivid nightmare:

"*Engaged!* Don't, mother, please." He trembled again: "Good lord! Engaged to that tomboy!"

The thought seemed to strike him to the very core of his being. He who might ally himself with *anyone* sacrificing his hopes of happiness and advancement with a child of the earth.

"Don't, mother!" he repeated in a cry of entreaty.

"She has the blood of the Kingsnorths!" reminded Mrs. Chichester.

"It is pretty well covered up in O'Connell Irish," replied Alaric bitterly. "Please don't say any more, mater. You have upset me for the day. Really, you have — for the whole day."

But his mother was not to be shaken so easily in her determination. She went on:

"She has the breeding of my sister Angela, dear."

"You wouldn't think it to watch her and listen to her. Now, once and for all —" and he tried to pass his mother and go into the garden.

There was no escape. Mrs. Chichester held him firmly

"She will have *five thousand pounds a year* when she is twenty-one!"

She looked the alarmed youth straight in the eyes. She was fighting for her own. She could not bear to think of parting with this home where she had lived so happily with her husband, and where her two children were born and reared. Even though Peg was not of the same caste, much could be done with her. Once accept her into the family and the rest would be easy.

As she looked piercingly into Alaric's eyes, he caught the full significance of the suggestion. His lips pursed to whistle — but no sound came through them. He muttered hoarsely, as though he were signing away his right to happiness:

"Five thousand pounds a year! Five thousand of the very best!"

Mrs. Chichester took the slowly articulated words in token of acceptance. He would do it! She knew he would! Always ready to rise to a point of honour and to face a duty or confront a danger, he was indeed her son.

She took him in her arms and pressed his reluctant and shrinking body to her breast.

"Oh, my boy!" she wailed joyfully. "My dear, dear boy!"

Alaric disengaged himself alertly.

"Here, half a minute, mater. Half a minute, please. One can't burn all one's boats like that, without a cry for help."

"Think what it would mean, dear! Your family preserved, and a brand snatched from the burning!"

"That's just it. It's all right savin' the family. Any cove'll do that at a pinch. But I do not see myself as a 'brand-snatcher.' Besides, I am not *altogether* at liberty."

"What?" cried his mother.

"Oh, I've not *committed* myself to anything. But I've been three times to hear that wonderful woman speak — *once on the platform!* And people are beginning to talk. She thinks no end of me. Sent me a whole lot of stuff last week — '*Advanced Literature*' she calls it. I've got 'em all upstairs. Wrote every word of 'em herself. Never saw a woman who can *talk* and *write* as she can. And *outside* of all that I'm afraid I've more or less *encouraged* her. And there you are — the whole thing in a nutshell."

"It would unite our blood, Alaric," the fond mother insisted.

"Oh, hang our blood! I beg your pardon, mater, but really I can't make our blood the *first* thing."

"It would settle you for life, dear," she suggested after a pause.

"I'd certainly be settled all right," in a despairing tone.

"Think what it would mean, Alaric."

"I am, mater. I'm thinking — and thinking awfully hard. Now, just a moment. Don't let either of us talk. Just let us think. *I* know how much is at stake for the family, and *you* realise how much is at stake for *me*, don't you?"

"Indeed I do. And if I didn't think you would be happy I would not allow it — indeed I wouldn't."

Alaric thought for a few moments.

The result of this mental activity took form and substance as follows:

"She is not half-bad-lookin'— at times — when she's properly dressed."

"I've seen her look almost *beautiful!*" cried Mrs. Chichester.

Alaric suddenly grew depressed.

"Shockin' temper, mater!" and he shook his head despondently.

"That would soften under the restraining hand of affection!" reasoned his mother.

"She would have to dress her hair and drop *dogs*. I will not have a dog all over the place, and I do like tidiness in women. Especially their hair. In *that* I would have to be obeyed."

"The woman who *loves* always *obeys!*" cried his mother.

"Ah! There we have it!" And Alaric sprang up and faced the old lady. "There we have it! *Does* she *love* me?"

Mrs. Chichester looked fondly at her only son and answered:

"How could she be *near* you for the last month and *not* love you?"

Alaric nodded:

"Of course there *is* that. Now, let me see — just get a solid grip on the whole thing. *If* she *loves* me — and taking all things into consideration — for *your* sake and darling *Ethel's* — and for my — that is —"

He suddenly broke off, took his mother's hand between both of his and pressed it encouragingly, and with the courage of hopefulness, he said:

"Anyway, mater, it's a go! I'll do it. It will take a bit of doin', but I'll do it."

"Bless you, my boy," said the overjoyed mother, "Bless you."

As they came out of the little arbour it seemed as if Fate had changed the whole horizon for the Chichester family.

Mrs. Chichester was happy in the consciousness that her home and her family would be free from the biting grip of debt.

Alaric, on the other hand, seemed to have all the sunlight suddenly stricken out of his life. Still, it was his *duty*, and duty was in the Chichester motto.

As mother and son walked slowly toward the house, they looked up, and gazing through a tiny casement of the little Mauve-Room was Peg, her face white and drawn.

Alaric shivered again as he thought of his sacrifice.

CHAPTER XIV

ALARIC TO THE RESCUE

Mrs. Chichester went up to the Mauve-Room a little later and found Peg in the same attitude, looking out of the window — thinking.

"Good morning, Margaret," she began, and her tone was most conciliatory, not to say almost kindly.

"Good mornin'," replied Peg dully.

"I am afraid I was a little harsh with you last night," the old lady added. It was the nearest suggestion of an apology Mrs. Chichester had ever made.

"Ye'll never be again," flashed back Peg sharply.

"That is exactly what I was saying to Alaric. I shall never be harsh with you again. Never!"

If Mrs. Chichester thought the extraordinary unbending would produce an equally Christian-like spirit in Peg, she was unhappily mistaken. Peg did not vary her tone or her attitude. Both were absolutely uncompromising.

"Ye'll have to go to New York if ye ever want to be harsh with me again. That is where ye'll have to go. To New York."

"You are surely not going to leave us just on account of a few words of correction?" reasoned Mrs. Chichester.

"I am," replied Peg, obstinately. "An' ye've done all the correctin' ye'll ever do with me."

"Have you thought of all you are giving up?"

"I thought all through the night of what I am going back to. And I am going back to it as soon as Mr. Hawkes comes. And now, if ye don't mind, I'd rather

be left alone. I have a whole lot to think about, an' they're not very happy thoughts, ayther — an' I'd rather be by meself — if ye plaze."

There was a final air of dismissal about Peg that astonished and grieved the old lady. How their places had changed in a few hours! Yesterday it was Mrs. Chichester who commanded and Peg who obeyed — *sometimes.*

Now, she was being sent out of a room in her own house, and by her poor little niece.

As she left the room Mrs. Chichester thought sadly of the condition misfortune had placed her in. She brightened as she realised that they had still one chance — through Alaric — of recouping, even slightly, the family fortunes. The thought flashed through Mrs. Chichester's mind of how little Margaret guessed what an honour was about to be conferred upon her through the nobility of her son in sacrificing himself on the altar of duty. The family were indeed repaying good for evil — extending the olive branch — in tendering their idol as a peace-offering at the feet of the victorious Peg.

Meanwhile, that young lady had suddenly remembered two things — firstly — that she must not return to her father in anything Mrs. Chichester had given her. Out of one of the drawers she took the little old black jacket and skirt and the flat low shoes and the red-flowered hat. Secondly, it darted through her mind that she had left Jerry's present to her in its familiar hiding-place beneath a corner of the carpet. Not waiting to change into the shabby little dress, she hurried downstairs into the empty living-room, ran across, and there, sure enough, was her treasure undisturbed. She took it up and a pang went through her heart as it beat in on her that never again would its donor discuss its contents with her. This gentleman of title, masquerading as a farmer, who had

led her on to talk of herself, of her country and of her father, just to amuse himself. The blood surged up to her temples as she thought how he must have laughed at her when he was away from her: though always when with her he showed her the gravest attention, and consideration, and courtesy. It was with mingled feelings she walked across the room, the book open in her hand, her eyes scanning some of the familiar and well-remembered lines.

As she reached the foot of the stairs, Alaric came in quickly through the windows.

"Hello! Margaret!" he cried cheerfully, though his heart was beating nervously at the thought of what he was about to do — and across his features there was a sickly pallor.

Peg turned and looked at him, at the same moment hiding the book behind her back.

"What have you got there, all tucked away?" he ventured as the opening question that was to lead to the all-important one.

Peg held it up for him to see. "The only thing I'm takin' away that I didn't bring with me."

"A book, eh?"

"That's what it is — a book;" and she began to go upstairs.

"Taking it *away?*" he called up to her.

"That's what I'm doin'," and she still went on up two more steps.

Alaric made a supreme effort and followed her.

"You're not really goin' away — cousin?" he gasped.

"I am," replied Peg. "An' ye can forget the relationship the minnit the cab drives me away from yer door!"

"Oh, I say, you know," faltered Alaric. "Don't be cruel!"

"Cruel, is it?" queried Peg in amazement. "Sure, what's there cruel in *that*, will ye tell me?"

She looked at him curiously.

For once all Alaric's confidence left him. His tongue was dry and clove to the roof of his mouth. Instead of conferring a distinction on the poor little creature he felt almost as if he were about to ask her a favour.

He tried to throw a world of tenderness into his voice as he spoke insinuatingly:

"I thought we were goin' to be such good little friends," and he looked almost languishingly at her.

For the first time Peg began to feel some interest. Her eyes winked as she said:

"*Did* ye? Look at that, now. *I* didn't."

"I say, you know," and he went up on the same step with her: "I say — really ye mustn't let what the mater said last night upset ye! Really, ye mustn't!"

"Mustn't I, now? Well, let me tell ye it *did* upset me — an' I'm still upset — an' I'm goin' to kape on bein' upset until I get into the cab that dhrives me from yer door."

"Oh, come, now — what nonsense! Of course the mater was a teeny bit disappointed — that's all. Just a teeny bit. But now it's all over."

"Well, *I* was a *whole lot* disappointed — an' it's all over with me, too." She started again to get away from him, but he stepped in front of her.

"Don't go for a minute. Why not forget the whole thing and let's all settle down into nice, cosy, jolly little pals, eh?"

He was really beginning to warm to his work the more she made difficulties. It was for Alaric to overcome them.

The family roof was at stake. He had gone chivalrously to the rescue. He was feeling a gleam of real enthusiasm. Peg's reply threw a damper again on his progress.

"Forget it, is it? No — I'll not forget it. My memory is not so convaynient. You're not goin' to be disgraced again through me!" She passed him and went on to the landing. He followed her eagerly.

"Just a moment," he cried, stopping her just by an oriel window. She paused in the centre of the glow that radiated from its panes.

"What is it, now?" she asked impatiently. She wanted to go back to her room and make her final preparations.

Alaric looked at her with what he meant to be adoration in his eyes.

"Do you know, I've grown really awfully fond of you?" His voice quivered and broke. He had reached one of the crises of his life.

Peg looked at him and a smile broadened across her face.

"No, I didn't know it. When did ye find it out?"

"Just now — down in that room — when the thought flashed through me that perhaps you really meant to leave us. It went all through me. 'Pon my honour, it did. The idea positively hurt me. Really *hurt* me."

"Did it, now?" laughed Peg. "Sure, an' I'm glad f it."

"Glad! Glad?" he asked in astonishment.

"I am. I didn't think anythin' could hurt ye unless it disturbed yer comfort. An' I don't see how my goin' will do that."

"Oh, but it will," persisted Alaric. "Really, it will."

"Sure, now?" Peg was growing really curious. What was this odd little fellow trying to tell her? He

looked so tremendously in earnest about something What in the world was it?

Alaric answered her without daring to look at her.

He fixed his eye on his pointed shoe and said quaveringly:

"You know, meetin' a girl round the house for a whole month, as I've met you, has an awful effect on a fellow. *Awful!* Really!"

"*Awful?*" cried Peg.

"Yes, indeed it has. It grows part of one's life, as it were. Not to see you running up and down those stairs: sittin' about all over the place: studyin' all your jolly books and everything — you know the thought *bruises* me — really it *bruises*."

Peg laughed heartily. Her good humour was coming back to her.

"Sure, ye'll get over it, Alaric," she said encouragingly.

"That's just it," he protested anxiously. "I'm afraid I *won't* get over it. Do you know, I'm quite *ache-y now*. Indeed I am."

"Ache-y?" repeated Peg, growing more and more amused.

Alaric touched his heart tenderly:

"Yes, really. All round *here!*"

"Perhaps it's because I disturbed yer night's rest, Alaric?"

"You've disturbed *all* my rest. If you *go* I'll never have *any* rest." Once again he spurred on his flagging spirits and threw all his ardour into the appeal. "I've really begun to care for you very much. Oh, very, *very* much. It all came to me in a flash — down in the room."

And — for the moment — he really meant it. He began to see qualities in his little cousin which he had never

noticed before. And the fact that she was not apparently a willing victim, added zest to the attack.

Peg looked at him with unfeigned interest:

"Sure, that does ye a great dale of credit. I've been thinkin' all the time I've known ye that ye only cared for *yerself* — like all Englishmen."

"Oh, no," protested Alaric. "Oh, *dear*, no. We care a great deal at times — oh, a *great* deal — and never say a word about it — not a single word. You know we hate to wear our hearts on our sleeves."

"I don't blame ye. Ye'd wear them out too soon, maybe."

Alaric felt that the moment had now really come.

"Cousin," he said, and his voice dropped to the caressing note of a wooer: "Cousin! Do you know I am going to do something now I've never done before?"

He paused to let the full force of what was to come have its real value.

"What is it, Alaric?" Peg asked, all unconscious of the drama that was taking place in her cousin's heart! "Sure, what is it? Ye're not goin' to do somethin' *useful*, are ye?"

He braced himself and went on: "I am going to ask a very charming young lady to marry me. Eh?"

"*Are* ye?"

"I am."

"What do ye think o' that, now!"

"And — *who* — *do* — *you* — *think* — *it* — *is?*"

He waited, wondering if she would guess correctly. It would be so helpful if only she could.

But she was so unexpected.

"I couldn't guess it in a hundred years, Alaric. Rale'y, I couldn't."

"Oh, *try!* Do. *Try!*" he urged.

"I couldn't think who'd marry *you* — inside I couldn't. Mebbe the poor girl's *blind*. Is *that* it?"

"Can't you guess? No? Really?"

"*No*, I'm tellin' ye. Who is it?"

"*You!*"

The moment had come. The die was cast. His life was in the hands of Fate — and of Peg. He waited breathlessly for the effect.

Peg looked at him in blank astonishment.

All expression had left her face.

Then she leaned back against the balustrade and laughed long and unrestrainedly. She laughed until the tears came coursing down her cheeks.

Alaric was at first nonplussed. Then he grasped the situation in its full significance. It was just a touch of hysteria. He joined her and laughed heartily as well.

"Aha!" he cried, between laughs: "That's a splendid sign. Splendid! I've always been told that girls *cry* when they're proposed to."

"Sure, that's what I'm doin'," gasped Peg. "I'm cryin'— laughin'."

Alaric suddenly checked his mirth and said seriously:

"'Course ye must know, cousin, that I've nothin' to offer you except a life-long devotion: a decent old name — and — my *career* — when once I get it goin'. I only need an incentive to make no end of a splash in the world. *You* would be my incentive."

Peg could hardly believe her ears. She looked at Alaric while her eyes danced mischievously.

"Go on!" she said. "Go on. Sure, ye're doin' fine!"

"Then it's all right?" he asked fervently.

"Faith! I think it's wondherful."

"Good. Excellent. But — there are one or two little things to be settled first."

Even as the victorious general, with the capitulated citadel, it was time to dictate terms. Delays in such matters, Alaric had often been told, were unwise. A clear understanding at the beginning saved endless complications afterwards.

"Just a few little things," he went on, "such as a little *obedience* — that's most essential. A modicum of care about *ordinary* things,— for instance, about dress, speech, hair, et cetera — and *no* '*Michael*.'"

"Oh!" cried Peg dejectedly, while her eyes beamed playfully:

"Sure, couldn't I have '*Michael*'?"

"*No*," he said firmly. It was well she should understand that once and for all. He had never in a long experience, seen a dog he disliked more.

"Oh!" ejaculated Peg, plaintively.

Prepared to, at any rate, compromise, rather than have an open rupture, he hastened to modify his attitude:

"At least *not* in the *house*."

"In the *stables?*" queried Peg.

"We'd give him a jolly little kennel somewhere, if you really wanted him, and you could see him — say *twice* a day."

He felt a thrill of generosity as he thus unbent from his former rigid attitude.

"Then it wouldn't be 'love me love my dog'?" quizzed Peg.

"Well, really, you know, one cannot regulate one's life by proverbs, cousin. Can one?" he reasoned.

"But '*Michael*' is all I have in the wurrld, except me father. Now, what could ye give me instead of him?"

Here was where a little humour would save the whole

situation. Things were becoming strained — and over a dog.

Alaric would use his *subtler* humour — keen as bright steel — and turn the edge of the discussion.

"What can I give you instead of '*Michael*'?"

He paused, laughed cheerfully and bent tenderly over her and whispered:

"*Myself*, dear cousin! MYSELF!" and he leaned back and watched the effect. A quick joke at the right moment had so often saved the day. It would again, he was sure. After a moment he whispered softly:

"What do you say — dear cousin?"

Peg looked up at him, innocently, and answered:

"Sure, I think I'd rather have '*Michael*'— if ye don't mind."

He started forward: "Oh, come, I say! You don't *mean* that?"

"I do," she answered decidedly.

"But think — just for one moment — of the *advantages?*"

"For you, or for me?" asked Peg.

"For *you* — of course," replied the disappointed Alaric.

"I'm thryin' to — but I can only think of '*Michael.*' Sure, I get more affection out of his bark of greetin' than I've ever got from a human bein' in England. But then he's *Irish.* No, thank ye, all the same. If it makes no difference to ye, I'd rather have '*Michael.*'"

"You don't mean to say that you *refuse* me?" he asked blankly.

"If ye don't mind," replied Peg meekly.

"You actually decline my *hand* and — er — *heart?*"

"That's what I do."

"Really?" He was still unable to believe it. He wanted to hear her refusal distinctly.

"Rale'y," replied Peg, gravely.

"Is that *final?*"

"It's the most final thing there is in the wurrld," replied Peg, on the brink of an outburst of laughter.

Alaric looked so anxious and crestfallen now — in sharp contrast to his attitude of triumph a few moments before.

To her amazement the gloom lifted from her cousin's countenance. He took a deep breath, looked at her in genuine relief, and cried out heartily:

"I say! You're a *brick!*"

"Am I?" asked Peg.

"It's really awfully good of you. Some girls in your position would have jumped at me. Positively *jumped!*"

"*Would* they — poor things!"

"But *you* — why, you're a genuine, little, hall-marked 'A number one brick'! I'm extremely obliged to you."

He took her little hand and shook it warmly.

"You're a plucky little girl, that's what you are — *a. plucky — little — girl.* I'll never forget it — *never.* If there is anythin' I can do — at any time — anywhere — call on me. I'll be there — right on the spot."

He heard his mother's voice, speaking to Jarvis, in the room below. At the same moment he saw Ethel walking toward them along the corridor.

He said hurriedly and fervently to Peg:

"Bless you, cousin. You've taken an awful load off my mind. I was really worried. I *had* to ask you. Promised to. See you before you go! Hello! Ethel! All right? Good!" Without waiting for an answer,

the impulsive young gentleman went on up to his own room to rejoice over his escape.

Peg walked over and took Ethel by both hands and looked into the tired, anxious eyes.

"Come into my room," she whispered.

Without a word, Ethel followed her into the Mauve Room.

"Holy Mother!" she cried, "the whole house'll be awake"

CHAPTER XV

MONTGOMERY HAWKES

On the 30th day of June, Mr. Montgomery Hawkes glanced at his appointments for the following day and found the entry: "Mrs. Chichester, Scarboro — *in re* Margaret O'Connell."

He accordingly sent a telegram to Mrs. Chichester, acquainting her with the pleasant news that she might expect that distinguished lawyer on July 1, to render an account of her stewardship of the Irish agitator's child.

As he entered a first-class carriage on the Great Northern Railway at King's Cross station next day, bound for Scarboro, he found himself wondering how the experiment, dictated by Kingsnorth on his death-bed, had progressed. It was a most interesting case. He had handled several, during his career as a solicitor, in which bequests were made to the younger branches of a family that had been torn by dissension during the testator's lifetime, and were now remembered for the purpose of making tardy amends.

But in those cases the families were all practically of the same caste. It would be merely benefiting them by money or land. Their education had already been taken care of. Once the bequest was arranged all responsibility ended.

The O'Connell-Kingsnorth arrangement was an entirely different condition of things altogether. There were so many provisions each contingent on something in the character of the beneficiary. He did not regard the case with the same equanimity he had handled the

others. It opened up so many possibilities of difficulty, and the object of Mr. Kingsnorth's bequest was such an amazing young lady to endeavour to do anything with. He had no preconceived methods to employ in the matter. It was an experiment where his experience was of no use. He had only to wait developments, and, should any real crisis arise, consult with the Chief Executor.

By the time he reached Scarboro he had arranged everything in his mind. It was to be a short and exceedingly satisfactory interview and he would be able to catch the afternoon express back to London.

He pictured Miss O'Connell as being marvellously improved by her gentle surroundings and eager to continue in them. He was sure he would have a most satisfactory report to make to the Chief Executor.

As he walked up the beach-walk he was humming gaily an air from "Giroflè-Girofla." He was entirely free from care and annoyance. He was thinking what a fortunate young lady Miss O'Connell was to live amid such delightful surroundings. It would be many a long day before she would ever think of leaving her aunt.

All of which points to the obvious fact that even gentlemen with perfectly balanced legal brains, occasionally mis-read the result of force of character over circumstances.

He was shown into the music-room and was admiring a genuine Greuze when Mrs. Chichester came in.

She greeted him tragically and motioned him to a seat beside her.

"Well?" he smiled cheerfully. "And how is our little protégée?"

"Sit down," replied Mrs. Chichester, sombrely.

"Thank you."

He sat beside her, waited a moment, then, with some

sense of misgiving, asked: "Everything going well, I hope?"

"Far from it." And Mrs. Chichester shook her head sadly.

"Indeed?" His misgivings deepened.

"I want you to understand one thing, Mr. Hawkes," and tears welled up into the old lady's eyes: "I have done my best."

"I am sure of that, Mrs. Chichester," assured the lawyer, growing more and more apprehensive.

"But she wants to leave us to-day. She has ordered a cab. She is packing now."

"Dear, dear!" ejaculated the bewildered solicitor, "Where is she going?"

"Back to her father."

"How perfectly ridiculous. *Why?*"

"I had occasion to speak to her severely — last night. She grew very angry and indignant — and — now she has ordered a cab."

"Oh!" and Hawkes laughed easily. "A little childish temper. Leave her to me. I have a method with the young. Now — tell me — what is her character? How has she behaved?"

"At times *admirably*. At others —" Mrs. Chichester raised her hands and her eyes in shocked disapproval.

"Not quite — ?" suggested Mr. Hawkes.

"Not *at all!*" concluded Mrs. Chichester.

"How are her studies?"

"Backward."

"Well, we must not expect too much," said the lawyer reassuringly. "Remember everything is foreign to her."

"Then you are not disappointed, Mr. Hawkes?"

"Not in the least. We can't expect to form a

character in a month. Does she see many people?"

"Very few. We try to keep her entirely amongst ourselves."

"I wouldn't do that. Let her mix with people. The more the better. The value of contrast. Take her visiting with you. Let her talk to others — listen to them — exchange opinions with them. Nothing is better for sharp-minded, intelligent and *ignorant* people than to meet others cleverer than themselves. The moment they recognise their own inferiority, they feel the desire for improvement."

Mrs. Chichester listened indignantly to this, somewhat platitudinous, sermon on how to develop character. And indignation was in her tone when she replied:

"Surely, she has sufficient example here, sir?"

Hawkes was on one of his dearest hobbies — "Characters and Dispositions." He had once read a lecture on the subject. He smiled almost pityingly at Mrs. Chichester, as he shook his head and answered her.

"No, Mrs. Chichester, pardon me — but *no!* She has *not* sufficient example here. Much as I appreciate a *home* atmosphere, it is only when the young get *away* from it that they really develop. It is the contact with the world, and its huge and marvellous interests, that strengthens character and solidifies disposition. It is only —" he stopped.

Mrs. Chichester was evidently either not listening, or was entirely unimpressed. She was tapping her left hand with a lorgnette she held in her right, and was waiting for an opportunity to speak. Consequently, Mr. Hawkes stopped politely.

"... you can persuade her to remain with us, I will do anything you wish in regard to her character and its development."

"Don't be uneasy," he replied easily, "she will stay. May I see her?"

Mrs. Chichester rose, crossed over to the bell and rang it. She wanted to prepare the solicitor for the possibility of a match between her son and her niece. She would do it *now* and do it tactfully.

"There is one thing you must know, Mr. Hawkes. My son is in love with her," she said, as though in a burst of confidence.

Hawkes rose, visibly perturbed.

"What? Your son?"

"Yes," she sighed. "Of course she is hardly a suitable match for Alaric — as *yet*. But by the time she is of age —"

"Of age?"

"By that time, much may be done."

Jarvis came in noiselessly and was despatched by Mrs. Chichester to bring her niece to her.

Hawkes was moving restlessly about the room. He stopped in front of Mrs. Chichester as Jarvis disappeared.

"I am afraid, madam, that such a marriage would be out of the question."

"What do you mean?" demanded the old lady.

"As one of the executors of the late Mr. Kingsworth's will, in my opinion, it would be defeating the object of the dead man's legacy."

Mrs. Chichester retorted, heatedly:

"He desires her to be *trained*. What training is better than *marriage*?"

"Almost any," replied Mr. Hawkes. "Marriage should be the union of two formed characters. Marriage between the young is one of my pet objections. It is a condition of life essentially for those who have

reached maturity in nature and in character. I am preparing a paper on it for the Croydon Ethical Society and —"

Whatever else Mr. Hawkes might have said in continuation of another of his pet subjects was cut abruptly short by the appearance of Peg. She was still dressed in one of Mrs. Chichester's gifts. She had not had an opportunity to change into her little travelling suit.

Hawkes looked at her in delighted surprise. She had completely changed. What a metamorphosis from the forlorn little creature of a month ago! He took her by the hand and pressed it warmly, at the same time saying heartily:

"Well, well! *What* an improvement."

Peg gazed at him with real pleasure. She was genuinely glad to see him. She returned the pressure of his hand and welcomed him:

"I'm glad you've come, Mr. Hawkes."

"Why, you're a young lady!" cried the astonished solicitor.

"Am I? Ask me aunt about that!" replied Peg, somewhat bitterly.

"Mr. Hawkes wishes to talk to you, dear," broke in Mrs. Chichester, and there was a melancholy pathos in her voice and in her eyes.

If neither Alaric nor Mr. Hawkes could deter her, what would become of them?

"And I want to talk to Mr. Hawkes, too," replied Peg. "But ye must hurry," she went on. "I've only a few minutes."

Mrs. Chichester went pathetically to the door, and, telling Mr. Hawkes she would see him again when he had interviewed her niece, she left them.

"Now, my dear Miss Margaret O'Connell —" began the lawyer.

"Will ye let me have twenty pounds?" suddenly asked Peg.

"Certainly. *Now?*" and he took out his pocket-book.

"This minnit," replied Peg positively.

"With pleasure," said Mr. Hawkes, as he began to count the bank-notes.

"And I want ye to get a passage on the first ship to America. This afternoon if there's one," cried Peg, earnestly.

"Oh, come, come —" remonstrated the lawyer.

"The twenty pounds I want to buy something for me father — just to remember England by. If ye think me uncle wouldn't like me to have it because I'm lavin', why then me father'll pay ye back. It may take him a long time, but he'll pay it."

"Now listen —" interrupted Mr. Hawkes.

"Mebbe it'll only be a few dollars a week, but father always pays his debts — in time. That's all he ever needs — *time*."

"What's all this nonsense about going away?"

"It isn't nonsense. I'm goin' to me father," answered Peg resolutely.

"Just when everything is opening out for you?" asked the lawyer.

"Everything has closed up on me," said Peg. "I'm goin' back."

"Why, you've improved out of all knowledge."

"Don't think that. Me clothes have changed — that's all. When I put me thravellin' suit back on again, ye won't notice any *improvement*."

"But think what you're giving up."

"I'll have me father. I'm only sorry I gave *him* up — for a month."

"The upbringing of a young lady!"

"I don't want it. I want me father."

"The advantages of gentle surroundings."

"New York is good enough for me — with me father."

"Education!"

"I can get that in America — with me father."

"Position!"

"I don't want it. I want me father."

"Why this rebellion? This sudden craving for your father?"

"It isn't *sudden*," she turned on him fiercely. "I've wanted him all the time I've been here. I only promised to stay a month anyway. Well, I've stayed a month. Now, I've disgraced them all here an' I'm goin' back home."

"*Disgraced* them?"

"Yes, disgraced them. Give me that twenty pounds, please," and she held out her hand for the notes.

"How have you disgraced them?" demanded the astonished lawyer.

"Ask me aunt. She knows. Give me the money, please."

Hawkes hunted through his mind for the cause of this upheaval in the Chichester home. He remembered Mrs. Chichester's statement about Alaric's affection for his young cousin. Could the trouble have arisen from *that?* It gave him a clue to work on. He grasped it.

"Answer me one question truthfully, Miss O'Connell."

"What is it? Hurry. I've a lot to do before I go."

"Is there an affair of the *heart?*"

"D'ye mean *love?*"

"Yes."

"Why d'ye ask me that?"

"Answer me," insisted Mr. Hawkes.

Peg looked down on the ground mournfully and replied:

"Me heart is in New York — with me father."

"Has anyone made love to you since you have been here?"

Peg looked up at him sadly and shook her head. A moment later, a mischievous look came into her eyes, and she said, with a roguish laugh:

"Sure one man wanted to kiss me an' I boxed his ears. And another — *almost* man — asked me to marry him."

"Oh!" ejaculated the lawyer.

"Me cousin Alaric."

"And what did you say?" questioned Hawkes.

"I towld him I'd rather have '*Michael.*'"

He looked at her in open bewilderment and repeated:

"*Michael?*"

"Me dog," explained Peg, and her eyes danced with merriment.

Hawkes laughed heartily and relievedly.

"Then you refused him?"

"Of course I refused him. *Me* marry *him!* What for, I'd like to know?"

"Is he too young?"

"He's too selfish, an' too silly too, an' too everything I don't like in a man!" replied Peg.

"And what *do* you like in a man?"

"Precious little from what I've seen of them in England."

As Hawkes looked at her, radiant in her spring-like beauty, her clear, healthy complexion, her dazzling teeth, her red-gold hair, he felt a sudden thrill go through him. His life had been so full, so concentrated on the level-

opment of his career, that he had never permitted the feminine note to obtrude itself on his life. His effort had been rewarded by an unusually large circle of influential clients who yielded him an exceedingly handsome revenue. He had heard whispers of a magistracy. His *public* future was assured.

But his *private* life was arid. The handsome villa in Pelham Crescent had no one to grace the head of the table, save on the occasional visits of his aged mother, or the still rarer ones of a married sister.

And here was he in the full prime of life.

It is remarkable how, at times, in one's passage through life, the throb in a voice, the breath of a perfume, the chord of an old song, will arouse some hidden note that had so far lain dormant in one's nature, and which, when awakened into life, has influences that reach through generations.

It was even so with Hawkes, as he looked at the little Irish girl, born of an aristocratic English mother, looking up at him, hand outstretched, expectant, in all her girlish pudicity.

Yielding to some uncontrollable impulse, he took the little hand in both of his own. He smiled nervously, and there was a suspicious tremor in his voice:

"You would like a man of position in life to give you what you most need. Of years to bring you dignity and strength to protect you."

"I've got *him*," stated Peg unexpectedly, withdrawing her hand and eyeing the bank-notes that seemed as far from her as when she first asked for them.

"You've got him?" ejaculated the man-of-law, aghast.

"I have. Me father. Let *me* count that money. The cab will be here an' I won't be ready —"

Hawkes was not to be denied now. He went on in his softest and most persuasive accents:

"I know one who would give you all these — a man who has reached the years of discretion! one in whom the follies of youth have merged into the knowledge and reserve of early middle-age. A man of position and of means. A man who can protect you, care for you, admire you — and be proud to marry you."

He felt a real glow of eloquent pleasure, as he paused for her reply to so dignified and ardent an appeal.

If Peg had been listening, she certainly could not have understood the meaning of his fervid words, since she answered him by asking a question:

"Are ye goin' to let me have the money?"

"Do not speak of *money* at a moment like this!" cried the mortified lawyer.

"But ye said ye would let me have it!" persisted Peg.

"Don't you wish to know who the man is, whom I have just described, my dear Miss O'Connell?"

"No, I don't. Why should I? With me father waitin' in New York for me — an' I'm waitin' for that —" and again she pointed to his pocket-book.

"Miss O'Connell — may I say — *Margaret*, I was your uncle's adviser — his warm personal friend. We spoke freely of you for many weeks before he died. It was his desire to do something for you that would change your whole life and make it full and happy and contented. Were your uncle alive, I know of nothing that would give him greater pleasure than for his old friend to take you, your young life — into his care. Miss O'Connell — *I* am the man!"

It was the first time this dignified gentleman had ever invited a lady to share his busy existence, and he felt the

warm flush of youthful nervousness rush to his cheeks, as it might have done had he made just such a proposal, as a boy. It really seemed to him that he *was* a boy as he stood before Peg waiting for her reply.

Again she did not say exactly what he had thought and hoped she would have said.

"Stop it!" she cried. "What's the matther with you men this morning? Ye'd think I was some great lady, the way ye're all offerin' me yer hands an' yer names an' yer influences an' yer dignities. Stop it! Give me that money and let me go."

Hawkes did not despair. He paused.

"Don't give your answer too hastily. I know it must seem abrupt — one might almost say *brutal*. But *I* am alone in the world — *you* are alone. Neither of us have contracted a regard for anyone else. And in addition to that — there would be no occasion to marry until you are twenty-one. There!"

And he gazed at her with what he fondly hoped were eyes of sincere adoration.

"Not until I'm twenty-one! Look at that now!" replied Peg — it seemed to Mr. Hawkes, somewhat flippantly.

"Well! What do you say?" he asked vibrantly.

"What do I say, to *what?*"

"Will you consent to an engagement?"

"With *you?*"

"Yes, Miss O'Connell, with me."

Peg suddenly burst into a paroxysm of laughter.

Hawkes' face clouded and hardened.

The gloomier he looked, the more hearty were Peg's ebullitions of merriment.

Finally, when the hysterical outburst had somewhat abated, he asked coldly:

"Am I to consider that a refusal?"

"Ye may. What would *I* be doin', marryin' the likes of you? Answer me that?"

His passion began to dwindle, his ardour to lessen.

"That is final?" he queried.

"Absolutely, completely and entirely final."

Not only did all *hope* die in Mr. Hawkes, but seemingly all *regard* as well.

Ridicule is the certain death-blow to a great and disinterested affection.

Peg's laugh still rang in his ears and as he looked at her now, with a new intelligence, unblinded by illusion, he realised what a mistake it would have been for a man of his temperament, leanings and achievements to have linked his life with hers. Even his first feeling of resentment passed. He felt now a warm tinge of gratitude. Her refusal — bitter though its method had been — was a sane and wise decision. It was better for both of them.

He looked at her gratefully and said:

"Very well. I think your determination to return to your father, a very wise one. I shall advise the Chief Executor to that effect. And I shall also see that a cabin is reserved for you on the first out-going steamer, and I'll personally take you on board."

"Thank ye very much, sir. An' may I have the twenty pounds?"

"Certainly. Here it is," and he handed her the money.

"I'm much obliged to ye. An' I'm sorry if I hurt ye by laughin' just now. But I thought ye were jokin', I did."

"Please never refer to it again."

"I won't — indade I won't. I am sure it was very nice of ye to want to marry me —"

"I beg you —" he interrupted, stopping her with a gesture.

"Are you goin' back to London to-day?"

"By the afternoon express."

"May I go with you?"

"Certainly."

"Thank ye," cried Peg. "I won't kape ye long I've not much to take with me. Just what I brought here — that's all."

She hurried across the room to the staircase. When she was halfway up the stairs, Jarvis entered and was immediately followed by Jerry.

Peg stopped when she saw him come into the room.

As Jarvis went out, Jerry turned and saw Peg looking down at him. The expression on her face was at once stern and wistful and angry and yearning.

He went forward eagerly.

"Peg!" he said gently, looking up at her.

"I'm goin' back to me father in half an hour!" and she went on up the stairs.

"In half an hour?" he called after her.

"In thirty minutes!" she replied and disappeared.

As Jerry moved slowly away from the staircase, he met Montgomery Hawkes.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CHIEF EXECUTOR APPEARS UPON THE SCENE

"Why, how do you do, Sir Gerald?" and Hawkes went across quickly with outstretched hand.

"Hello, Hawkes," replied Jerry, too preoccupied to return the act of salutation. Instead, he nodded in the direction Peg had gone and questioned:

"What does she mean — going in a few minutes?"

"She is returning to America. Our term of guardianship is over."

"How's that?"

"She absolutely refuses to stay here any longer. My duties in regard to her, outside of the annual payment provided by her late uncle, end to-day," replied the lawyer.

"I think not, Hawkes."

"I beg your pardon?"

"As the Chief Executor of the late Mr. Kingsnorth's will, *I* must be satisfied that its conditions are complied with in the *spirit* as well as to the *letter*," said Jerry authoritatively.

"Exactly," was the solicitor's reply. "And —?"

"Mr. Kingsnorth expressly stipulated that a year was to elapse before any definite conclusion was arrived at. So far only a month has passed."

"But she insists on returning to her father!" protested Mr. Hawkes.

"Have you told her the conditions of the will?"

"Certainly not. Mr. Kingsnorth distinctly stated she was not to know them."

"Except under exceptional circumstances. I consider the circumstances most exceptional."

"I am afraid I cannot agree with you, Sir Gerald."

"That is a pity. But it doesn't alter my intention."

"And may I ask what that intention is?"

"To carry out the spirit of Mr. Kingsnorth's bequest."

"And what do you consider the spirit?"

"I think we will best carry out Mr. Kingsnorth's last wishes by making known the conditions of his bequest to Miss O'Connell and then let her decide whether she wishes to abide by them or not."

"As the late Mr. Kingsnorth's legal adviser, I must strongly object to such a course," protested the indignant lawyer.

"All the same, Mr. Hawkes, I feel compelled to take it, and I must ask you to act under my instructions."

"Really," exclaimed Mr. Hawkes; "I should much prefer to resign from my executorship."

"Nonsense. In the interests of all parties, we must act together and endeavour to carry out the dead man's wishes."

The lawyer considered a moment and then in a somewhat mollified tone, said:

"Very well, Sir Gerald. If you think it is necessary, why then by all means, I shall concur in your views."

"Thank you," replied the Chief Executor.

Mrs. Chichester came into the room and went straight to Jerry. At the same time, Alaric burst in through the garden and greeted Jerry and Hawkes.

"I heard you were here —" began Mrs. Chichester.

Jerry interrupted her anxiously: "Mrs. Chichester, I was entirely to blame for last night's unfortunate busi-

ness. Don't visit your displeasure on the poor little child. Please don't."

"I've tried to tell her that I'll overlook it. But she seems determined to go. Can you suggest anything that might make her stay? She seems to like you — and after all — as you so generously admit — it *was* — to a certain extent your fault."

Before Jerry could reply, Jarvis came down the stairs with a pained — not to say mortified — expression on his face. Underneath his left arm he held tightly a shabby little bag and a freshly wrapped up parcel: in his right hand, held far away from his body, was the melancholy and picturesque terrier —"*Michael.*"

Mrs. Chichester looked at him in horror.

"Where are you going with those — *things?*" she gasped.

"To put them in a cab, madam," answered the humiliated footman. "Your niece's orders."

"Put those articles in a travelling-bag — use one of my daughter's," ordered the old lady.

"Your niece objects, madam. She sez she'll take nothing away she didn't bring with her."

The grief-stricken woman turned away as Jarvis passed out. Alaric tried to comfort her. But the strain of the morning had been too great. Mrs. Chichester burst into tears.

"Don't weep, mater. Please don't. It can't be helped. We've all done our best. I know *I* have!" and Alaric put his mother carefully down on the lounge and sat beside her on the arm. He looked cheerfully at Jerry and smiled as he said:

"I even offered to marry her if she'd stay. Couldn't do more than that, could I?"

Hawkes listened intently.

Jerry returned Alaric's smile as he asked:

"*You* offered to marry her?"

Alaric nodded:

"Poor little wretch. Still I'd have gone through with it."

"And what did she say?" queried Jerry.

"First of all she laughed in my face — right in my face — the little beggar!"

Hawkes frowned gloomily as though at some painful remembrance.

"And after she had concluded her cachinnatory outburst, she coolly told me she would rather have '*Michael.*' She is certainly a remarkable little person and outside of the inconvenience of having her here, we should all be delighted to go on taking care of her. And if dancing is the rock we are going to split on, let us get one up every week for her. Eh, Jerry? You'd come, wouldn't you?"

Down the stairs came Peg and Ethel. Peg was holding one of Ethel's hands tightly. There seemed to be a thorough understanding between them. Peg was dressed in the same little black suit she wore when she first entered the Chichester family and the same little hat.

They all looked at her in amazement, amusement, interrogation and disgust respectively.

When they reached the bottom of the stairs, Ethel stopped Peg and entreated:

"Don't go!"

"I must. There's nothin' in the wurrld 'ud kape me here now. Nothin'!"

"I'll drive with you to the station. May I?" asked Ethel.

"All right, dear." Peg crossed over to Mrs. Chichester:

"Good-bye, aunt. I'm sorry I've been such a throuble to ye."

The poor lady looked at Peg through misty eyes and said reproachfully:

"*Why* that dress? Why not one of the dresses I gave you?"

"This is the way I left me father, an' this is the way I'm goin' back to him!" replied Peg sturdily. "Good-bye, Cousin Alaric," and she laughed good-naturedly at the odd little man. In spite of everything he did, he had a spice of originality about him that compelled Peg to overlook what might have seemed to others unpardonable priggishness.

"Good-bye — little devil!" cried Alaric, cheerfully taking the offered hand. "Good luck to ye. And take care of yerself," added Alaric, generously.

As Peg turned away from him, she came face to face with Jerry — or as she kept calling him in her brain by his new name — to her — Sir Gerald Adair. She dropped her eyes and timidly held out her hand:

"Good-bye!" was all she said.

"You're not going, Peg," said Jerry, quietly and positively.

"Who's goin' to stop me?"

"The Chief Executor of the late Mr. Kingsnorth's will."

"An' who is *that?*"

"'Mr. Jerry,' Peg!"

"*You* an executor?"

"I am. Sit down — here in our midst — and know why you have been here all the past month."

As he forced Peg gently into a chair, Mrs. Chichester and Alaric turned indignantly on him. Mr. Hawkes moved down to listen, and, if necessary, advise.

There was pleasure showing on one face only — on Ethel's.

She alone wanted Peg to understand her position in that house.

Since the previous night the real womanly note had awakened in Ethel.

Her heart went out to Peg.

CHAPTER XVII

PEG LEARNS OF HER UNCLE'S LEGACY

Peg looked up wonderingly from the chair.

"Me cab's at the door!" she said, warningly to Jerry.

"I am sorry to insist, but you must give me a few moments," said the Chief Executor.

"*Must?*" cried Peg.

"It is urgent," replied Jerry quietly.

"Well, then — hurry;" and Peg sat on the edge of the chair, nervously watching "Jerry."

"Have you ever wondered at the real reason you were brought here to this house and the extraordinary interest taken in you by relations who, until a month ago, had never even bothered about your existence?"

"I have, indeed," Peg answered. "But whenever I've asked any one, I've always been told it was me uncle's wish."

"And it was. Indeed, his keenest desire, just before his death, was to atone in some way for his unkindness to your mother."

"Nothin' could do that," and Peg's lips tightened.

"That was why he sent for you."

"Sendin' for me won't bring me poor mother back to life, will it?"

"At least we must respect his intentions. He desired that you should be given the advantages your mother had when she was a girl."

"'Ye've made yer bed; lie in it'! That was the message he sent me mother when she was starvin'. And why? Because she loved me father. Well, *I* love me

father an' if he thought his money could separate us he might just as well have let me alone. No one will ever separate us."

"In justice to yourself," proceeded Jerry, "you must know that he set aside the sum of one thousand pounds a year to be paid to the lady who would undertake your training."

Mrs. Chichester covered her eyes to hide the tears of mortification that sprang readily into them.

Alaric looked at Jerry in absolute disgust.

Hawkes frowned his disapproval.

Peg sprang up and walked across to her aunt and looked down at her.

"A thousand pounds a year!" She turned to Jerry and asked: "Does she get a thousand a year for abusin' me?"

"For taking care of you," corrected Jerry.

"Well, what do ye think of that?" cried Peg, gazing curiously at Mrs. Chichester. "A thousand pounds a year for makin' me miserable, an' the poor dead man thinkin' he was doin' me a favour!"

"I tell you this," went on Jerry, "because I don't want you to feel that you have been living on charity. You have not."

Peg suddenly blazed up:

"Well, I've been *made* to feel it," and she glared passionately at her aunt. "Why wasn't I told this before? If I'd known it I'd never have stayed with ye a minnit! Who are *you*, I'd like to know, to bring me up any betther than me father? He's just as much a gentleman as any of yez. He never hurt a poor girl's feelin's just because she was poor. Suppose he hasn't any money? Nor *me?* What of it? Is it a crime? What has yer money an' yer breedin' done for you? It's dried up the

very blood in yer veins, that's what it has! Yer frightened to show one real, human, kindly impulse. Ye don't know what happiness an' freedom mean. An' if *that* is what money does, I don't want it. Give me what I've been used to — *poverty*. At least I can laugh sometimes from me heart, an' get some pleasure out o' life without disgracin' people!"

Peg's anger gave place to just as sudden a twinge of regret as she caught sight of Ethel, white-faced, and staring at her compassionately. She went across to Ethel and buried her face on her shoulder and wept as she wailed.

"Why wasn't I told! I'd never have stayed! Why wasn't I told?"

And Ethel comforted her:

"Don't cry, dear," she whispered. "Don't. The day you came here we were beggars. You have literally fed and housed us for the last month."

Peg looked up at Ethel in astonishment.

She forgot her own sorrow.

"Ye were beggars?"

"Yes. We have nothing but the provision made for your training."

Poor Mrs. Chichester looked at her daughter reproachfully.

Alaric had never seen his sister even *interested* much less *excited* before. He turned to his mother, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"I give it up! That's all I can say! I simply give it up!"

Peg grasped the full meaning of Ethel's words:

"And will ye have nothin' if I go away?"

Peg paused: Ethel did not speak.

Peg persisted:

"Tell me — are ye ralely dependin' on *me?* Spake to me. Because if ye are, I won't go. I'll stay with ye. I wouldn't see ye beggars for the wurrld. I've been brought up amongst them, an' I know what it is."

Suddenly she took Ethel by the shoulders and asked in a voice so low that none of the others heard her:

"Was that the reason ye were goin' last night?"

Ethel tried to stop her.

The truth illumined Ethel's face and Peg saw it and knew.

"Holy Mary!" she cried, "and it was I was drivin' ye to it. Ye felt the insult of it every time ye met me — as ye said last night. Sure, if I'd known, dear, I'd never have hurt ye, I wouldn't! Indade, I wouldn't!"

She turned to the others:

"There! It's all settled. I'll stay with ye, aunt, an' ye can tache me anythin' ye like. Will some one ask Jarvis to bring back me bundles an' '*Michael.*' I'm goin' to stay!"

Jerry smiled approvingly at her. Then he said:

"That is just what I would have expected you to do. But, my dear Peg, there's no need for such a sacrifice."

"Sure, why not?" cried Peg, excitedly. "Let me sacrifice meself. I feel like it this minnit."

"There is no occasion."

He walked over to Mrs. Chichester and addressed her:

"I came here this morning with some very good news for you. I happen to be one of the directors of Gifford's bank and I am happy to say that it will shortly reopen its doors and all the depositors' money will be available for them in a little while."

Mrs. Chichester gave a cry of joy as she looked proudly at her two children:

"Oh, Alaric!" she exclaimed: "My darling Ethel!"

"*Reopen* its doors?" Alaric commented contemptuously. "So it jolly well ought to. What right had it to *close* 'em? That's what *I* want to know. What right?"

"A panic in American securities, in which we were heavily interested, caused the suspension of business," explained Jerry. "The panic is over. The securities are rising every day. We'll soon be on easy street again."

"See here, mater," remarked Alaric firmly, "every ha'penny of ours goes out of Gifford's bank and into something that has a bottom to it. In future, *I'll* manage the business of this family."

The Chichester family, reunited in prosperity, had apparently forgotten the forlorn little girl sitting on the chair, who a moment before had offered to take up the load of making things easier for them by making them harder for herself.

All their backs were turned to her.

Jerry looked at her. She caught his eye and smiled, but it had a sad wistfulness behind it.

"Sure, they don't want me now. I'd better take me cab. Good day to yez." And she started quickly for the door.

Jerry stopped her.

"There is just one more condition of Mr. Kingsnorth's will that you must know. Should you go through your course of training satisfactorily to the age of twenty-one, you will inherit the sum of five thousand pounds a year."

"When I'm twenty-one, I get five thousand pounds a year?" gasped Peg.

"If you carry out certain conditions."

"An' what are they?"

"Satisfy the executors that you are worthy of the legacy."

"Satisfy *you?*"

"And Mr. Hawkes."

Peg looked at the somewhat uncomfortable lawyer, who reddened and endeavoured to appear at ease.

"Mr. Hawkes! Oho! Indade!" She turned back to Jerry: "Did he know about the five thousand? When I'm twenty-one?"

"He drew the will at Mr. Kingsnorth's dictation," replied Jerry.

"Was that why ye wanted me to be engaged to ye until I was twenty-one?" she asked the unhappy lawyer.

Hawkes tried to laugh it off.

"Come, come, Miss O'Connell," he said, "what nonsense!"

"Did *you* propose to Miss Margaret?" queried Jerry.

"Well —" hesitated the embarrassed lawyer — "in a measure — yes."

"That's what it was," cried Peg, with a laugh. "It was very measured. No wondher the men were crazy to kape me here and to marry me."

She caught sight of Alaric and smiled at him. He creased his face into a sickly imitation of a smile and murmured:

"Well, of course, I mean to say!" with which clear and well-defined expression of opinion, he stopped.

"I could have forgiven *you*, Alaric," said Peg, "but Mr. Hawkes, I'm ashamed of ye."

"It was surely a little irregular, Hawkes," suggested Jerry.

"I hardly agree with you, Sir Gerald. There can be nothing irregular in a simple statement of affection."

"Affection is it?" cried Peg.

"Certainly. We are both alone in the world. Miss O'Connell seemed to be unhappy: the late Mr. Kingsnorth desired that she should be trained — it seemed to me to be an admirable solution of the whole difficulty."

Peg laughed openly and turning to Jerry, said:

"He calls himself a '*solution*.' Misther Hawkes — go on with ye — I am ashamed of ye."

"Well, there is no harm done," replied Mr. Hawkes, endeavouring to regain his lost dignity.

"No!" retorted Peg. "It didn't go through, did it?"

Hawkes smiled at that, and taking Peg's hand, protested:

"However — always your friend and well-wisher."

"But nivver me husband!" insisted Peg.

"Good-bye."

"Where are ye goin' without me?"

"You surely are not returning to America *now?*" said Hawkes, in surprise.

"Why, of course, I'm goin' to me father now. Where else would I go?"

Hawkes hastened to explain:

"If you return to America to your father, you will violate one of the most important clauses in the will."

"If I go back to me father?"

"Or if he visits you — until you are twenty-one," added Jerry.

"Is that so?" And the blood rushed up to Peg's temples. "Well, then, that settles it. No man is goin' to dictate to me about me father. No *dead* man — nor no livin' one naythor."

"It will make you a rich young lady in three years, remember. You will be secure from any possibility of poverty."

"I don't care. I wouldn't stay over here for three years with —" she caught Mrs. Chichester's eyes fastened on her and she checked herself.

"I wouldn't stay away from me father for three years for all the money in the wurrld," she concluded, with marked finality.

"Very well," agreed Jerry. Then he spoke to the others: "Now, may I have a few moments alone with my ward?"

The family expressed surprise.

Hawkes suggested a feeling of strong displeasure.

"I shall wait to escort you down to the boat, Miss O'Connell." Bowing to every one, the man of law left the room.

Peg stared at Jerry incredulously.

"*Ward?* Is that *me?*"

"Yes, Peg. I am your legal guardian — appointed by Mr. Kingsnorth!"

"You're the director of a bank, the executor of an estate, an' now ye're me guardian. What do ye do with yer *spare* time?"

Jerry smiled and appealed to the others:

"Just a few seconds — alone."

Mrs. Chichester went to Peg and said coldly:

"Good-bye, Margaret. It is unlikely we'll meet again. I hope you have a safe and pleasant journey."

"Thank ye, Aunt Monica." Poor Peg longed for at least one little sign of affection from her aunt. She leaned forward to kiss her. The old lady either did not see the advance or did not reciprocate what it implied. She went on upstairs out of sight.

Mingled with her feeling of relief that she would never again be slighted and belittled by Mrs. Chichester, she

was hurt to the heart by the attitude of cold indifference with which her aunt treated her.

She was indeed overjoyed to think now it was the last she would ever see of the old lady.

Alaric held out his hand frankly:

"Jolly decent of ye to offer to stay here — just to keep us goin'— awfully decent. You are certainly a little wonder. I'll miss you terribly — really I will."

Peg whispered:

"Did ye know about that five thousand pounds when I'm twenty-one?"

"'Course I did. That was why I proposed. To save the roof." Alaric was nothing if not honest.

"Ye'd have sacrificed yeself by marryin' *me?*" quizzed Peg.

"Like a shot."

"There's somethin' of the *hero* about you, Alaric!"

"Oh, I mustn't boast," he replied modestly. "It's all in the family."

"Well, I'm glad ye didn't have to do it," Peg remarked positively.

"So am I. Jolly good of you to say 'No.' All the luck in the world to you. Drop me a line or a picture-card from New York. Look you up on my way to Canada — if I ever really go. 'Bye!" The young man walked over to the door calling over his shoulder to Jerry: "See ye lurkin' about somewhere, old dear!" and he too went out of Peg's life.

She looked at Ethel and half entreated, half commanded Jerry:

"Plaze look out of the window for a minnit. I want to spake to me cousin."

Jerry sauntered over to the window and stood looking at the gathering storm.

"Is that all over?" whispered Peg.

"Yes," replied Ethel, in a low tone.

"Ye'll never see him again?"

"Never. I'll write him that. What must you think of me?"

"I thought of you all last night," said Peg eagerly. "Ye seem like some one who's been lookin' for happiness in the dark with yer eyes shut. Open them wide, dear, and look at the beautiful things in the daylight and then you'll be happy."

Ethel shook her head sadly:

"I feel to-day that I'll never know happiness again."

"Sure, I've felt like that many a time since I've been here. Ye know three meals a day, a soft bed to slape in an' everythin' ye want besides, makes ye mighty discontented. If ye'd go down among the poor once in a while an' see what *they* have to live on, an' thry and help them, ye might find comfort and peace in doin' it."

Ethel put both of her hands affectionately on Peg's shoulders.

"Last night you saved me from myself — and then you shielded me from my family."

"Faith I'd do *that* for any poor girl, much less me own cousin."

"Don't think too hardly of me, Margaret. Please!" she entreated.

"I don't, dear. It wasn't yer fault. It was yer mother's."

"My mother's?"

"That's what I said. It's all in the way we're brought up what we become afterwards. Yer mother raised ye in a hot house instead of thrustin' ye out into

the cold winds of the wurrld when ye were young and gettin' ye used them. She taught ye to like soft silks and shining satins an' to look down on the poor, an' the shabby. That's no way to bring up anybody. Another thing ye learnt from her — to be sacret about things that are near yer heart instead of encouragin' ye to be outspoken an' honest. Of course I don't think badly of ye. Why should I? I had the advantage of ye all the time. It isn't ivery girl has the bringin' up such as I got from me father. So let yer mind be aisy, dear. I think only good of ye. God bless ye!" She took Ethel gently in her arms and kissed her.

"I'll drive down with you," said Ethel, brokenly, and hurried out.

Peg stood looking after her for a moment, then she turned and looked at Jerry, who was still looking out of the window.

"She's gone," said Peg, quietly.

Jerry walked down to her.

"Are you still determined to go?" he asked.

"I am."

"And you'll leave here without a regret?"

"I didn't say that sure."

"We've been good friends, haven't we?"

"I thought we were," she answered gently. "But friendship must be honest. Why didn't ye tell me ye were a gentleman? Sure, how was I to know? 'Jerry' might mean anybody. Why didn't ye tell me ye had a title?"

"I did nothing to get it. Just inherited it," he said simply. Then he added: "I'd drop it altogether if I could."

"Would ye?" she asked curiously.

"I would. And as for being a *gentleman*, why one

of the finest I ever met drove a cab in Piccadilly. He was a *gentle man* — that is — one who never willingly hurts another. Strange in a cabman, eh?"

"Why did ye let me treat ye all the time as an equal?"

"Because you *are* — superior in many things. Generosity, for instance."

"Oh, don't thry the comther on me. I know ye now. Nothin' seems the same."

"Nothing?"

"Nothin'!"

"Are we never to play like children again?" he pleaded.

"No," she said firmly. "Ye'll have to come out to New York to do it. An' then I mightn't."

"Will nothing make you stay?"

"Nothing. I'm just achin' for me home."

"Such as *this* could never be home to you?"

"*This?* Never," she replied positively.

"I'm sorry. Will you ever think of me?"

He waited. She averted her eyes and said nothing.

"Will you write to me?" he urged.

"What for?"

"I'd like to hear of you and from you. Will you?"

"Just to laugh at me spellin'?"

"Peg!" He drew near to her.

"Sir Gerald!" she corrected him and drew a little away.

"Peg, my dear!" He took both of her hands in his and bent over her.

Just for a moment was Peg tempted to yield to the embrace.

Had she done so, the two lives would have changed in

that moment. But the old rebellious spirit came uppermost, and she looked at him defiantly and cried:

"Are *you* goin' to propose to me, too?"

That was the one mistake that separated those two hearts. Sir Gerald drew back from her — hurt.

She was right — they were not equals.

She could not understand him, since he could never quite say all he felt, and she could never divine what was left unsaid.

She was indeed right.

Such as this could never be a home for her.

Jarvis came quietly in:

"Mr. Hawkes says, Miss, if you are going to catch the train —"

"I'll catch it," said Peg impatiently; and Jarvis went out.

Peg looked at Jerry's back turned eloquently toward her, as though in rebuke.

"Why in the wurrld did I say that to him?" she muttered. "It's me Irish tongue." She went to the door, and opened it noisily, rattling the handle loudly — hoping he would look around.

But he never moved.

She accepted the attitude as one of dismissal.

Under her breath she murmured:

"Good-bye, Misther Jerry — an' God bless ye — an' thank ye for bein' so nice to me." And she passed out.

In the hall Peg found Ethel and Hawkes waiting for her.

They put her between them in the cab and with "*Michael*" in her arms, she drove through the gates of Regal Villa never to return.

The gathering storm broke as she reached the station.

In storm Jerry came into her life, in storm she was leaving his.

The threads of what might have been a fitting addition to the "*Love Stories of the World*" were broken.

Could the break ever be healed?

CHAPTER XVIII

PEG'S FAREWELL TO ENGLAND

MANY and conflicting were Peg's feelings as she went aboard the ship that was to carry her from England forever.

In that short *month* she had experienced more contrasted feelings than in all the other *years* she had lived.

It seemed as if she had left her girlhood, with all its keen hardships and sweet memories, behind her.

When the vessel swung around the dock in Liverpool and faced toward America Peg felt that not only was she going back to the New World, but she was about to begin a new existence. Nothing would ever be quite the same again. She had gone through the leavening process of emotional life and had come out of it with her courage still intact, her honesty unimpaired, but somehow with her *faith* abruptly shaken. She had believed and trusted, and she had been — she thought — entirely mistaken, and it hurt her deeply.

Exactly why Peg should have arrived at such a condition — bordering as it was on cynicism — was in one sense inexplicable, yet from another point of view easily understood. That Jerry had not told her all about himself when they first met, as she did about herself to him, did not necessarily imply deceit on his part. Had she asked any member or servant in the Chichester family who and what "Jerry" was they would readily have told her. But that was contrary to Peg's nature. If she liked anyone, she never asked questions about them. It suggested a doubt, and doubt to Peg meant disloyalty

in friendship and affection. Everyone had referred to this young gentleman as "Jerry." He even introduced himself by that unromantic and undignified name. No one seemed to treat him with any particular deference, nor did anything in his manner seem to demand it. She had imagined that anyone with a title should not only be proud of it, but would naturally hasten to let everyone they met become immediately aware whom they were addressing.

She vividly remembered her father pointing out to her a certain north-of-Ireland barrister who — on the strength of securing more convictions under the "Crimes Act" than any other jurist in the whole of Ireland — was rewarded with the Royal and Governmental approval by having conferred on him the distinction and dignity of knighthood. It was the crowning-point of his career. It has steadily run through his life since as a thin flame of scarlet. He lives and breathes "knighthood." He thinks and speaks it. He *demands* recognition from his equals, even as he *compels* it from his inferiors. Her father told Peg that all the servants were drilled carefully to call him —"Sir Edward."

His relations, unaccustomed through their drab lives to the usages of the great, found extreme difficulty in acquiring the habit of using the new appellation in the place of the nick-name of his youth —"Ted." It was only when it was made a condition of being permitted an audience with the gifted and honoured lawyer, that they allowed their lips to meekly form the servile "Sir!" when addressing their distinguished relation.

When he visited Dublin Castle to consult with his Chiefs, and any of his old-time associates hailed him familiarly as "Ted!" a grieved look would cross his semi-Scotch features, and he would hasten to correct in

his broad, coarse brogue: "Sir Edward, me friend! Be the Grace of Her Majesty and the British Government — *Sir Edward* — if — ye plaze!"

There was one who took pride in the use of his title.

He desired and exacted the full tribute due the dignity it carried. Then why did not "Jerry" do the same?

She did not appreciate that to him the prefix having been handed down from generations, was as natural to him as it was unnatural to the aforementioned criminal lawyer. The one was born with it, consequently it became second nature to him. The other had it conferred on him for his zeal in procuring convictions of his own countrymen, and never having in his most enthusiastic dreams believed such a condition would come to pass — now that it was an accomplished fact, he naturally wanted all to know and respect it.

They were two distinct breeds of men.

Peg had occasionally met the type of the honoured lawyer. They sprang up as mushrooms over night during the pressure of the "Crimes Act," and were liberally rewarded by the government — some were even transferred to the English Bar. And they carried their blatant insistence even across the channel.

But the man of breeding who exacted nothing; of culture, who pretended not to have acquired it; of the real power and dignity of life, yet was simplicity itself in his manner to others — that kind of man was new to Peg.

She burned with shame as she thought of her leave-taking. What must Sir Gerald think of her?

Even to the end she was just the little "Irish nothin'," as she had justly, it seemed to her now, described herself to him. She had hurt and offended him. In that one rude, foolish, unnecessary question, "Are you goin' to propose too?" she had outraged common courtesy, and

made it impossible for him to say even a friendly "Good-bye" to her. She did not realise the full measure of the insult until afterwards. She had practically insinuated that he was following the somewhat sordid example of cousin Alaric and Montgomery Hawkes in proposing for her hand because, in a few years, she would benefit by her uncle's will. Such a suggestion was not only unworthy of her — it was an unforgivable thing to say to him. He had always treated her with the greatest courtesy and consideration, and because he did not flaunt his gentility before her, she had taken unwarranted umbrage and had said something that raised an impassable barrier between them.

All the way across the Atlantic poor lonely Peg had many opportunities of reviewing that brief glimpse of English life. She felt now how wrong her attitude had been to the whole of the Chichester family. She had judged them at first sight. She had resolved that they were just selfish, inconsiderate, characterless people. On reflection, she determined that they were not. And even if they had been, why should Peg have been their accuser? And after all, is there not an element of selfishness in every nature? Was Peg herself entirely immune?

And in a family with traditions to look back on and live up to, have they not a greater right to being self-centred than the plebeian with nothing to look back on or forward to? And, all things considered, is not selfishness a thoroughly human and entirely natural feeling? What right had she to condemn people wholesale for feeling and practising it?

These were the sum and substance of Peg's self-analysis during the first days of her voyage home.

Then the thought came to her,— were the Chichesters

really selfish? Now that she had been told the situation, she knew that her aunt had undertaken her training to protect Ethel and Alaric from distress and humiliation. She realised how distasteful it must have been to a lady of Mrs. Chichester's nature and position to have occasion to receive into her house, amongst her own family, such a girl as Peg. And she had not made it easy for her aunt. She had regarded the family as being allied against her.

Was it not largely her own fault if they had been? Peg's sense of justice was asserting itself.

The thought of Alaric flashed through her mind, and with it came a little pang of regret for the many occasions she had made fun of him — and in his mother's presence. His proposal to her had its pathetic as well as its humorous side. To save his family he would have deliberately thrown away his own chance of happiness by marrying her. Yet he would have done it willingly and cheerfully and, from what she had seen of the little man, he would have lived up to his obligations honourably and without a murmur.

Alaric's sense of relief at her refusal of him suddenly passed before her, and she smiled broadly as she saw, in a mental picture, his eager and radiant little face as he thanked her profusely for being so generous as to refuse him. Looking back, Alaric was by no means as contemptible as he had appeared at first sight. He had been coddled too much. He needed the spur of adversity and the fight of battle with his fellowmen. Experience and worldly wisdom could make him a useful and worthy citizen, since fundamentally there was nothing seriously wrong with him.

Peg's outlook on life was distinctly becoming clarified.

Lastly, she thought of Ethel. Poor, unhappy, lonely

Ethel! In her little narrow ignorance, Peg had taken an intense dislike to her cousin from the beginning. Once or twice she had made friendly overtures to Ethel, and had always been repulsed. She placed Ethel in the category of selfish English-snobdom that she had heard and read about and now, apparently, met face to face. Then came the vivid experience at night when Ethel laid bare her soul pitilessly and torrentially for Peg to see. With it came the realisation of the heart-ache and misery of this outwardly contented and entirely unemotional young lady. Beneath the veneer of repression and convention Peg saw the fires of passion blazing in Ethel, and the cry of revolt and hatred against her environment. But for Peg she would have thrown away her life on a creature such as Brent because there was no one near her to understand and to pity and to succour.

Peg shuddered as she thought of the rash act Ethel had been saved from — blackening her life in the company of that satyr.

How many thousands of girls were there in England today, well-educated, skilled in the masonry of society — to all outward seeming perfectly contented, awaiting their final summons to the marriage-market — the culmination of their brief, inglorious careers. Yet if one could penetrate beneath the apparent calm, one might find boiling in *their* blood and beating in *their* brains the same revolt that had driven Ethel to the verge of the Dead Sea of lost hopes and vain ambitions — the vortex of scandal.

When from time to time a girl of breeding and of family elopes with an under-servant or a chauffeur, the unfortunate incident is hushed up and the parents attribute the unhappy occurrence primarily to some mental or moral twist in the young lady. They should seek the fault in their own hearts and lives. It is the home life of Eng-

land that is responsible for a large portion of the misery that drives the victims to open revolt. The children are not taught from the time they can first speak to be perfectly frank and honest about everything they think and feel. They are too often left in the care of servants at an age when parental influence has the greatest significance. On the rare occasions when they are permitted to enter the august presence of their parents, they are often treated with a combination of tolerant affection and imperial severity. Small wonder the little ones in their development to adolescence evade giving confidences that have neither been asked for nor encouraged. They have to learn the great secrets of life and of nature from either bitter experience or from the lips of strangers. Children and parents grow up apart. It often takes a convulsion of nature or a devastating scandal to awaken the latter to the full realisation of their responsibility.

During their talk the morning following that illuminating incident, Peg learned more of Ethel's real nature than she had done in all of the four weeks she had seen and listened to her daily.

She had opened her heart to Peg, and the two girls had mingled confidences. If they had only begun that way, what a different month it might have been for both! Peg resolved to watch Ethel's career from afar: to write to her constantly: and to keep fresh and green the memory of their mutual regard.

At times there would flash through Peg's mind — what would her future in America be — with her father? Would he be disappointed? He so much wanted her to be provided for that the outcome of her visit abroad would be, of a certainty, in the nature of a severe shock to him. What would be the outcome? How would he receive her? And what had all the days to come in store

for her with memory searching back to the days that were? She had a longing now for education: to know the essential things that made daily intercourse possible between people of culture. She had been accustomed to look on it as affectation. Now she realised that it was as natural to those who had acquired the masonry of gentle people as her soft brogue and odd, blunt, outspoken ways were to her.

From now on she would never more be satisfied with life as it was of old. She had passed through a period of awakening; a searchlight had been turned on her own shortcomings and lack of advantages. She had not been conscious of them before, since she had been law unto herself. But now a new note beat in on her. It was as though she had been colour-blind and suddenly had the power of colour-differentiation vouchsafed her and looked out on a world that dazzled by its new-found brilliancy. It was even as though she had been tone-deaf and, by a miracle, had the gift of sweet sounds given her, and found herself bathed in a flow of sweet music. She was bewildered. Her view of life had changed. She would have to rearrange her outlook by her experience if she hoped to find happiness.

And always as she brooded and argued with and criticised herself and found things to admire in what had hitherto been wrong to her — always the face of Jerry rose before her and the sound of his voice came pleasantly to her ears and the memory of his regard touched gently at her heart, and the thought of her final mistake burnt and throbbed in her brain.

And with each pulsation of the giant engines she was carried farther and farther away from the scene of her first romance. One night she made her "farewell" to

England and all it contained that had played a part in her life.

It was the night before she reached New York.

As she came nearer and nearer to America, the thought of one who was waiting for her — who had never shown anger or resentment toward her — whatever she did; who had never shown liking for any but her; who had always given her the love of his heart and the fruit of his brain; who had sheltered and taught and loved and suffered for her,— rose insistently before her and obliterated all other impressions and all other memories.

As she spoke her "farewell" to England, Peg turned her little body toward the quickly nearing shores of America and thanked God that waiting to greet her would be her father, and entreated Him that he would be spared to her, and that when either should die that she might be called first; that life without him would be barren and terrible! and above all, she pleaded that He would keep her little heart loyal always to her childhood-hero, and that no other should ever supplant her father in her love and remembrance.

When she awoke next day amid the bustle of the last morning on board, it seemed that her prayer had been answered.

Her farewell to England was indeed final.

She had only one thought uppermost — she was going to see her father.

BOOK V

PEG RETURNS TO HER FATHER

CHAPTER I

AFTER MANY DAYS

Frank O'Connell stood on the quay that morning in July, and watched the great ship slowly swing in through the heads, and his heart beat fast as he waited impatiently while they moored her.

His little one had come back to him.

His fears were at rest.

She was on board that floating mass of steel and iron, and the giant queen of the water had gallantly survived storm and wave and was nestling alongside the pier.

Would she be the same Peg? That was the thought beating through him as he strained his eyes to see the familiar and beloved little figure. Was she coming back to him — transformed by the magic wand of association — a great lady? He could scarcely believe that she *would*, yet he had a half-defined fear in his soul that she might not be the same.

One thing he made up his mind to — never again would he think of separation. Never again would he argue her into agreeing to go away from him. He had learned his lesson and by bitter experience. Never again until *she* wished it.

Amid the throngs swarming down the gangways he suddenly saw his daughter, and he gave a little gasp of surprised pleasure, and a mist swam before his eyes and a great lump came into his throat and his heart beat as a trip-hammer. It was the same Peg that had gone away a month ago. The same little black suit and the hat

with the berries and the same bag and "*Michael*" in her arms.

Their meeting was extraordinary. It was quite unlike what either had supposed it would be. There was a note of strangeness in each. There was — added to the fulness of the heart — an aloofness — a feeling that, in the passage of time, life had not left either quite the same.

How often that happens to two people who have shared the intimacy of years and the affection of a lifetime! After a separation of even a little while, the break in their joint-lives, the influence of strangers, and the quick rush of circumstance during their parting, creates a feeling neither had ever known. The interregnum had created barriers that had to be broken down before the old relationship could be resumed.

O'Connell and Peg made the journey home almost in silence. They sat hand in hand in the conveyance whilst Peg's eyes looked at the tall buildings as they flashed past her, and saw the daring advertisements on the boardings and listened to the ceaseless roar of the traffic.

All was just as she had left it.

Only Peg had changed.

New York seemed a Babel after the quiet of that little north of England home. She shivered as thoughts surged in a jumbled mass through her brain.

They reached O'Connell's apartment.

It had been made brilliant for Peg's return.

There were additions to the meagre furnishings Peg had left behind. Fresh pictures were on the walls. There were flowers everywhere.

O'Connell watched Peg anxiously as she looked around. How would she feel toward her home when she contrasted it with what she had just left?

His heart bounded as he saw Peg's face brighten as

she ran from one object to another and commented on them.

"It's the grand furniture we have now, father!"

"Do ye like it, Peg?"

"That I do. And it's the beautiful picture of Edward Fitzgerald ye have on the wall there!"

"Ye mind how I used to rade ye his life?"

"I do indade. It's many's the tear I've shed over him and Robert Emmet."

"Then ye've not forgotten?"

"Forgotten what?"

"All ye learned as a child and we talked of since ye grew to a girl?"

"I have not. Did ye think I would?"

"No, Peg, I didn't. Still, I was wandherin'—"

"What would I be doin' forgettin' the things ye taught me?"

He looked at her and a whimsical note came in his voice and the old look twinkled in his eyes.

"It's English I thought ye'd be by now. Ye've lived so long among the Saxons."

"English! Is it?" And her tone rang with disgust and her look was one of disdain. "English ye thought I'd be. Sure, ye ought to know me better than that!"

"I do, Peg. I was just tasin' ye."

"An' what have ye been doin' all these long days without me?"

He raised the fifteen sheets of his manuscript and showed them to her.

"This."

She looked over her shoulder and read:

"From '*Buck-shot*' to '*Agricultural Organization*.' "*The History of a Generation of English Misrule*, by Frank Owen O'Connell."

She looked up proudly at her father.

"It looks wondherful, father."

"I'll rade it to you in the long evenin's now we're together again."

"Do, father."

"And we won't separate any more, Peg, will we?"

"We wouldn't have this time but for you, father."

"Is it sorry ye are that ye went?"

"I don't know. I'm sorry o' coorse, and *glad*, too, in some ways."

"What made yez come back so sudden-like?"

"I only promised to stay a month."

"Didn't they want ye any longer?"

"In one way they did, an' in another they didn't. It's a long history — that's what it is. Let us sit down here as we used in the early days and I'll tell ye the whole o' the happenin's since I left ye."

She made him comfortable as had been her wont before, and, sitting on the little low stool at his feet, she told him the story of her month abroad and the impelling motive of her return.

She softened some things and omitted others — Ethel entirely. That episode should be locked forever in Peg's heart.

Jerry she touched on lightly.

O'Connell asked her many questions about him, remembering the tone of her later letters. And all the time he never took his eyes from her face, and he marked how it shone with a warm glow of pleasure when Jerry's name occurred, and how the gleam died away and settled into one of sadness when she spoke of her discovery that he had a title.

"They're queer people, the English, Peg."

"They are, father."

"They're cool an' cunnin' an' crafty, me darlin'."

"Some o' them are fine an' honourable an' clever too, father."

"Was this fellow that called himself 'Jerry'—an' all the while was a Lord — that same?"

"Ivery bit of it, father."

"And he trated ye dacent-like?"

"Sure, I might have been a *Lady*, the way he behaved to me."

"Did he iver smile at ye?"

"Many's the time."

"Do ye remember the proverb I taught ye as a child?"

"Which wun, father? I know a hundred, so I do."

"'Beware the head of a bull, the heels of a horse, of the smile of an Englishman!'"

He paused and looked at her keenly.

"Do you remember that, Peg?"

"I do. There are Englishmen *and* Englishmen. There are *plenty* o' bad Irish, and by the same token there are *some good* Englishmen. An' he is wun o' them."

"Why didn't he tell ye he was a Lord?"

"He didn't think it necessary. Over there they let ye gather from their manner what they are. They don't think it necessary to be tellin' everyone."

"It's the strange ones they are, Peg, to be rulin' us."

"Some day, father, they'll go over to Ireland and learn what we're really like, and then they'll change everything. Jerry said that."

"They've begun to already. Sure, there's a man named Plunkett has done more in a few years than all the governments have accomplished in all the years they've been blunderin' along tryin' to thrample on us. An' sure, Plunkett has a title, too!"

"I know, father. Jerry knows him and often spoke of him."

"Did he, now?"

"He did. He said that so long as the English government 'ud listen to kindly, honourable men like Plunkett, there was hope of makin' Ireland a happy, contented people, an' Jerry said —"

"It seems Misther Jerry must have said a good deal to yez."

"Oh, he did. Sure, it was *he* started me learnin' things, an' I am goin' on learnin' now, father. Let us both learn."

"What?" cried the astonished father.

"O' coorse, I know ye have a lot o' knowledge, but it's the little *fine* things we Irish have got to learn. An' they make life seem so much bigger an' grander by bein' considerate an' civil an' soft-spoken to each other. We've let the brutality of all the years that have gone before eat into us, and we have thrown off all the charm and formality of life, and in their place adopted a rough and crude manner to each other that does not come really from our hearts, but from the memory of our wrongs."

Unconsciously Peg had spoken as she had heard Jerry so often speak when he discussed the Irish. She had lowered her voice and concluded with quiet strength and dignity. The contrast to the beginning of the speech was electrical. O'Connell listened amazed.

"Did the same Jerry say that?"

"He did, father. An' much more. He knows Ireland well, an' loves it. Many of his best friends are Irish — an'—"

"Wait a minnit. Have I ever been 'rough an' crude' in me manner to you, Peg?"

"Never, father. But, faith, *you* ought to be a Lord

yerself. There isn't one o' them in England looks any betther than you do. It's in their *manner* that they have the advantage of us."

"And where would *I* be gettin' the manner of a Lord, when me father died the poorest peasant in the village, an' me brought up from hand to mouth since I was a child?"

"I'm sorry I said anythin', father. I wasn't reproachin' ye."

"I know that, Peg."

"I'm so proud of ye that yer manner manes more to me than any man o' title in England."

He drew her gently to him.

"There's the one great danger of two people who have grown near to each other separatin'. When they meet again, they each think the other has changed. They look at each other with different eyes, Peg. An' that's what yer doin' with me. So long as I was near ye, ye didn't notice the roughness o' me speech an' the lack o' breedin' an' the want o' knowledge. Ye've seen and listened to others since who have all I never had the chance to get. God knows I want *you* to have all the advantages that the wurrld can give ye, since you an' me country — an' the memory of yer mother — are all I have had in me life these twenty years past. An' that was why I urged ye to go to England on the bounty of yer uncle. I wanted ye to know there was another kind of a life, where the days flowed along without a care or a sorrow. Where poverty was but a word, an' misery had no place. An' ye've seen it, Peg. An' the whole wurrld has changed for ye, Peg. An' from now you'll sit in judgment on the dead and gone days of yer youth — an' in judgment on me —"

She interrupted him violently:

"What are ye sayin' to me at all! *I* sit in judgment on *you!* What do ye think I've become? Let me tell ye I've come back to ye a thousand times more yer child than I was when I left ye. What I've gone through has only strengthened me love for ye and me reverence for yer life's work. *I may* have changed. But don't we all change day by day, even as we pass them close to each other. An' if the change is for the betther, where's the harm? I *have* changed, father. There's somethin' wakened in me I never knew before. It's a *woman* I've brought ye back instead o' the *girl* I left. An' it's the *woman'll* stand by ye, father, even as the child did when I depended on ye for every little thing. There's no power in the wurrld'll ever separate us!"

She clung to him hysterically.

Even while she protested the most he felt the strange new note in her life. He held her firmly and looked into her eyes.

"There's one thing, Peg, that must part us, some day, when it comes to you."

"What's that, father?"

"*Love*, Peg."

She lowered her eyes and said nothing.

"Has it come? Has it, Peg?"

She buried her face on his breast, and though no sound came, he knew by the trembling of her little body that she was crying.

So it *had* come into her life.

The child he had sent away a month ago had come back to him transformed in that little time — into a woman.

The Cry of Youth and the Call of Life had reached her heart.

CHAPTER II

LOOKING BACKWARD

THAT night Peg and her father faced the future. They argued out all it might mean. They would fight it together. It was a pathetic, wistful little Peg that came back to him, and O'Connell set himself the task of lifting something of the load that lay on his child's heart.

After all, he reasoned with her, with all his gentility and his advantages to have allowed Peg to like him and then to deliberately hurt her at the end, just as she was leaving, for a fancied insult, did not augur well for the character of Jerry.

He tried to laugh her out of her mood.

He chided her for joking with an Englishman at a critical moment such as their leave-taking.

"And it *was* a joke, Peg, wasn't it?"

"Sure, it was, father."

"You ought to have known betther than that. During all that long month ye were there did ye meet one Englishman that ever saw a joke?"

"Not many, father. Cousin Alaric couldn't."

"Did ye meet *one?*"

"I did, father.

"Ye did?"

"I did."

"*There* was a man whose friendship ye might treasure."

"I do treasure it, father."

"Ye do?"

"Yes, father."

"Who was it?"

"Jerry, father."

O'Connell took a long breath and sighed.

Jerry! Always Jerry!

"I thried several jokes on him, an' he saw most of 'em."

"I'd like to see this paragon, faith."

"I wish ye could, father. Indade I do. Ye'd be such good friends."

"*We'd* be friends? Didn't ye say he was a *gintleman?*"

"He sez a *gintleman* is a man who wouldn't willingly hurt anybody else. And he sez, as well, that it doesn't matther what anybody was born, if they have that quality in them they're just as much gintleman as the people with ancestors an' breedin'. An' he said that the finest gintleman he ever met was a *cabman.*"

"A cabman, Peg?"

"Yes, faith — that's what he said. The cabman couldn't hurt anybody, and so he was a gintleman."

"Did he mane it?"

"He meant everything he said — to *me.*"

"There isn't much the matther with him, I'm thinkin'."

"There's nothin' the matther with him, father."

"Mebbe he is Irish way back. It's just what an Irishman would say — a *rale* Irishman."

"There's no nationality in character or art, or sport or letthers or music. They're all of one great commonwealth. They're all one brotherhood, whether they're white or yellow or red or black. There's no nationality about them. The wurrld wants the best, an' they don't care what colour the best man is, so long as he's *great!*"

O'Connell listened amazed.

"An' where might ye have heard that?"

"Jerry towld me. An' it's thrue. I believe it."

They talked far into the night.

He unfolded his plans.

If his book was a success and he made some little money out of it, they would go back to Ireland and live out their lives there. And it was going to be a wonderful Ireland, too, with the best of the old and ceaseless energy of the new.

An Ireland worth living in.

They would make their home there again, and this time they would not leave it.

"But some day we might go to England, father, eh?"

"What for?"

"Just to see it, father."

"I was only there once. It was there yer mother an' me were married. It was there she gave her life into me care."

He became suddenly silent, and the light of memory shone in his eyes, and the sigh of heart-ache broke through his lips.

And his thoughts stretched back through the years, and once again Angela was beside him.

Peg saw the look and knew it. She kept quite still. Then, as of old, when her father was in trouble, she did as she was wont in those old-young days — she slipped her little hand into his and waited for him to break the silence.

After a while he stood up.

"Ye'd betther be goin' to bed, Peg."

"All right, father."

She went to the door. Then she stopped.

"Ye're glad I'm home, father?"

He pressed her closely to him for answer.

"I'll never lave ye again," she whispered.

All through the night Peg lay awake, searching through the past and trying to pierce through the future.

Toward morning she slept and, in a whirling dream she saw a body floating down a stream. She stretched out her hand to grasp it when the eyes met hers, and the eyes were those of a dead man — and the man was Jerry.

She woke trembling with fear and she turned on the light and huddled into a chair and sat chattering with terror until she heard her father moving in his room. She went to the door and asked him to let her go in to him. He opened the door and saw his little Peg wild eyed, pale and terror-stricken, standing on the threshold. The look in her eyes terrified him.

"What is it, Peg, me darlin'? What is it?"

She crept in, and looked up into his face with her startling gaze, and she grasped him with both of her small hands, and in a voice dull and hopeless, cried despairingly:

"I dreamd he was dead! Dead! and I couldn't rache him. An' he went on past me — down the stream — with his face up-turned —" The grasp loosened, and just as she slipped from him, O'Connell caught her in his strong arms and placed her gently on the sofa and tended her until her eyes opened again and looked up at him.

It was the first time his Peg had fainted.

She had indeed come back to him changed.

He reproached himself bitterly.

Why had he insisted on her going?

She had a sorrow at her heart, now, that no hand could heal — not even his.

Time only could soften her grief — time — and —

CHAPTER III

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

THOSE first days following Peg's return found father and child nearer each other than they had been since that famous trip through Ireland, when he lectured from the back of his historical cart.

She became O'Connell's amanuensis. During the day she would go from library to library in New York, verifying data for her father's monumental work. At night he would dictate and she would write. O'Connell took a newer and more vital interest in the book, and it advanced rapidly toward completion.

It was a significant moment to introduce it, since the eyes of the world were turned on the outcome of the new measure for Home Rule for Ireland, that Mr. Asquith's government were introducing, and that appeared to have every chance of becoming law.

The dream of so many Irishmen seemed to be within the bounds of possibility of becoming a forceful reality.

Accordingly O'Connell strained every nerve to complete it. He reviewed the past; he dwelt on the present; he attempted to forecast the future. And with every new page that he completed he felt it was one more step nearer home — the home he was hoping for and building on for Peg — in Ireland.

There the colour would come back to her cheeks, the light to her eyes and the flash of merriment to her tongue. She rarely smiled now, and the pallor was always in her cheeks, and wan circles pencilled around her eyes spoke of hard working days and restless nights.

She no longer spoke of England.

He, wise in his generation, never referred to it. All her interest seemed to be centred in his book.

It was a strange metamorphosis for Peg — this writing at dictation: correcting her orthography; becoming familiar with historical facts and hunting through bookshelves for the actual occurrences during a certain period.

And she found a certain happiness in doing it.

Was it not for her father?

And was she not improving herself?

Already she would not be at such a disadvantage, as a month ago, with people.

The thought gratified her.

She had two letters from Ethel: the first a simple, direct one of gratitude and of regret; gratitude for Peg's kindness and loyalty to her, and regret that Peg had left them. The second told of a trip she was about to make to Norway with some friends.

They were going to close the house in Scarboro and return to London early in September.

Alaric had decided to follow his father's vocation and go to the bar. The following Autumn they would settle permanently in London while Alaric ate his qualifying dinners and addressed himself to making his career!

Of Brent she wrote nothing. That incident was apparently closed. She ended her letter with the warmest expressions of regard and affection for Peg, and the hope that some day they would meet again and renew their too-brief intimacy. The arrival of these letters and her daily 'deviling' for her father were the only incidents in her even life.

One evening some few weeks after her return, she was in her room preparing to begin her night's work with her

father when she heard the bell ring. That was unusual. Their callers were few. She heard the outer door open — then the sound of a distant voice mingling with her father's.

Then came a knock at her door.

"There's somebody outside here to see ye, Peg," said her father.

"Who is it, father?"

"A perfect sthranger — to me. Be quick now."

She heard her father's footsteps go into the little sitting-room and then the hum of voices.

Without any apparent reason she suddenly felt a tenseness and nervousness. She walked out of her room and paused a moment outside the closed door of the sitting-room and listened.

Her father was talking. She opened the door and walked in. A tall, bronzed man came forward to greet her. Her heart almost stopped. She trembled violently. The next moment Jerry had clasped her hand in both of his.

"How are you, Peg?"

He smiled down at her as he used to in Regal Villa: and behind the smile there was a grave look in his dark eyes, and the old tone of tenderness in his voice.

"How are you, Peg?" he repeated.

"I'm fine, Mr. Jerry," she replied in a daze. Then she looked at O'Connell and she hurried on to say:

"This is my father — Sir Gerald Adair."

"We'd inthroduced ourselves already," said O'Connell, good-naturedly, eyeing the unexpected visitor all the while. "And what might ye be doin' in New York?" he asked.

"I have never seen America. I take an Englishman's interest in what we once owned —"

"— And lost thro' misgovernment —"

"— Well, we'll say *misunderstanding* —"

"— As they'll one day lose Ireland —"

"— I hope not. The two countries understand each other better every day."

"It's taken centuries to do it."

"The more lasting will be the union."

As Peg watched Jerry she was wondering all the time why he was there. This quiet, undemonstrative, unemotional man. Why?

The bell rang again. Peg started to go, but O'Connell stopped her.

"It's McGinnis. This is his night to call and tell me the politics of the town. I'll take him into the next room, Peg, until yer visitor is gone."

"Oh, please"— said Jerry hurriedly and taking a step toward the door. "Allow me to call some other time."

"Stay where ye are!" cried O'Connell, hurrying out as the bell rang again.

Peg and Jerry looked at each other a moment, then she lowered her eyes.

"I want to ask ye something, Sir Gerald," she began.

"Jerry!" he corrected.

"Please forgive me for what I said to ye that day. It was wrong of me to say it. Yet it was just what ye might have expected from me. But ye'd been so fine to me — a little nobody — all that wonderful month that it's hurt me ever since. And I didn't dare write to ye — it would have looked like presumption from me. But now that ye've come here — ye've found me out and I want to ask yer pardon — an' I want to ask ye not to be angry with me."

"I couldn't be angry with you, Peg."

He paused, and, as he looked at her, the reserve of

the held-in, self-contained man was broken. He bent over her and said softly:

"Peg, I love you!"

A cry welled up from Peg's heart to her lips, and was stifled. The room swam around her.

Was all her misery to end?

Did this man come back from the mists of memory *because* he loved her?

She tried to speak but nothing came from her parched lips and tightened throat.

Then she became conscious that he was speaking again, and she listened to him with all her senses, with all her heart, and from her soul.

"I knew you would never write to me, and somehow I wondered just how much you cared for me — if at all. So I came here. I love you, Peg. I want you to be my wife. I want to care for you, and tend you, and make you happy. I love you!"

Her heart leaped and strained. The blood surged to her temples.

"Do you love me?" she whispered, and her voice trembled and broke.

"I do. Indeed I do. Be my wife."

"But you have a title," she pleaded.

"Share it with me!" he replied.

"Ye'd be so *ashamed* o' me, ye would!"

"No, Peg, I'd be proud of you. I love you!"

Peg, unable to argue or plead, or strive against what her heart yearned for the most, broke down and sobbed as she murmured:

"I love you, too, Mister Jerry."

In a moment she was in his arms.

It was the first time anyone had touched her tenderly besides her father. All her sturdy, boyish ruggedness

shrank from any display of affection. Just for a moment it did now. Then she slowly yielded herself.

But Jerry stroked her hair, and looked into her eyes and smiled down at her lovingly, as he asked:

"What will your father say?"

She looked happily up at him and answered:

"Do you know one of the first things me father taught me when I was just a little child?"

"Tell me!"

"It was from Tom Moore: 'Oh, there's nothin' half so sweet in life

As Love's young dream.'"

When O'Connell came into the room later he realised that the great summons had come to his little girl.

He felt a dull pain at his heart.

But only for a moment.

The thought came to him that he was about to give to England his daughter in marriage! Well, had he not taken from the English one of her fairest daughters as his wife?

And a silent prayer went up from his heart that happiness would abide with his Peg and her 'Jerry' and that their romance would last longer than had Angela's and his.

AFTERWORD

AFTERWORD

And now the moment has come to take leave of the people I have lived with for so long. Yet, though I say "Adieu!" I feel it is only a temporary leave-taking. Their lives are so linked with mine that some day in the future I may be tempted to draw back the curtain and show the passing of years in their various lives.

Simultaneously with the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill passing through the English House of Commons, O'Connell published his book.

Setting down clearly, without passion or prejudice, the actual facts of the ancient and modern struggle for Ireland's freedom, and foreshadowing the coming of the New Era of prosperity and enlightenment and education and business integrity — O'Connell found himself hailed as a modern prophet.

He appealed to them to *beg* no longer but to co-operate, to organize — above all to *work* and to work constantly and intelligently. He appealed to the Irish working in factories and workshops and in civil appointments in the great cities of the world, to come back to Ireland, and, once again to worship at the shrine of the beauty of God's Country! To open their eyes and their hearts to all the light and glory and wonder which God gives to the marvellous world He has made for humanity. To see the Dawn of a new nation and take in all the green and the incense of the flowers, and the sweet breath of the land. To grasp the real and tangible magnificence of their native country.

He appealed to all true Irishmen to take up their

lives again in the land from which they were driven, and to be themselves the progenitors of Ireland's New Nation.

It will not be long before his appeal will be answered and his prophecy fulfilled.

The Dawn of the New Ireland has begun to shed its light over the country, and the call of Patriotism will bring Irishmen from the farthest limits of the world, as it drove them away in the bitter time of blood and strife and ignorance and despotism.

Those days have passed. O'Connell was in the thick of the battle in his youth; in his manhood he now sees the fruit of the conflict.

Some day, with him, we will visit Peg in her English home, and see the marvels time and love have wrought upon her. But to those who knew her in the old days she is still the same Peg O' my Heart — resolute, loyal, unflinching, mingling the laugh with the tear — truth and honesty her bed-rock.

And whilst we are in London we will drop into the Law-Courts and hear Alaric Chichester, now Barrister-at-Law, argue his first case and show the possibility of following in his famous father's footsteps.

We will also visit Mrs. Chichester and hear of her little grand-child, born in Berlin, where her daughter, Ethel, met and married an attaché at the Embassy, and has formed a salon in which the illustrious in the Diplomatic world foregather.

It will be a grateful task to revive old memories of those who formed the foreground of the life-story of one whose radiant presence shall always live in my memory: whose steadfastness and courage endeared her to all; whose influence on those who met her and watched her

and listened to her was far-reaching, since she epitomized in her small body all that makes woman loveable and man supreme: honour, faith and Love!

Adieu! Peg O' my Heart!

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